

Happy New Year

THE JORDAN TIMES will not appear on Tuesday, Jan. 2, 1996, due to the New Year holiday on Monday, Jan. 1, 1996. The next issue of the paper will be published on Wednesday, Jan. 3. The editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish the paper's readers and advertisers a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Jordan Times

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King receives Nigerian message

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday received a message from Nigerian President Sani Abacha, voicing the Nigerian leadership's appreciation to King Hussein and its support for the King's pivotal role in the Middle East and his untiring efforts to establish peace in this region. The message was delivered to King Hussein by the Nigerian President's envoy Omar Sanda Tadio, during an audience at the Royal court. The audience was attended by the Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasem. The Nigerian envoy and the accompanying delegation left Amman later on Sunday. He was seen off at the airport by private chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef, the Nigerian charge d'affaire in Amman and several senior officials.

Road's closure

AMMAN (Petra) — The Public Security Department (PSD) Sunday announced the temporary closure of the roads leading from and to the traffic lights at Bayader Wadi Seer industrial area for maintenance works. PSD source said the road from the traffic lights to the 8th Circle will be closed from today until Jan. 3, and advised motorists to use the road linking the Abdoun bridge with the 7th and 8th Circles. The road leading from the traffic lights to the airport road will also be closed from Jan. 3 to Jan. 5. The alternative road is the Abdoun bridge — airport road. The road between the 8th circle and the industrial area will also be closed in one direction from Jan. 5 to Jan. 8. The PSD called on motorists to use the 8th circle, 7th circle, Abdoun bridge road leading to the industrial area's traffic lights.

Editor jailed for defaming Islamists

CAIRO (AFP) — The chief editor of an Egyptian government weekly was sentenced to two years in prison on Saturday for publishing an article judged to be defamatory against Islamic fundamentalists. Mahmoud Al Tohami was also fined \$600 for publishing in the Rose Al Youssef weekly an unsigned article criticising fundamentalist lawyers for pursuing entertainers, artists and intellectuals through the courts. The article, headlined "Legal action: A new weapon in the hands of the extremists," said Muslim fundamentalists were trying to "destroy society, embarrass justice and persecute artists and intellectuals." Sheikh Youssef Al Badri, known for launching numerous court cases against film-makers and intellectuals, and 25 other Islamic lawyers lodged a complaint against the article with a Cairo court. Because the case began in 1994 Dr. Tohami was judged according to an old press law, and not the tough new regulations introduced in May under which those found guilty of defamation face up to 15 years in jail.

Faith-healers kill 47 people in 1995

CAIRO (AFP) — Faith-healers in Egypt have killed 47 people and injured another 98 in Egypt this year by beating them to drive evil spirits out from their bodies, a government weekly said Saturday. Among the injured are 11 people who have completely lost their sight, according to the Rose Al Youssef which quoted security service figures. Police have arrested 224 healers this year, who say they can cure people by beating spirits out of their body or reciting verses from the holy book, the Koran. The best-known healer arrested was former civil servant Rifai Al Baz, who made \$13 million in three years through treating clients including jealous actresses who wanted curses put on their rivals.

Election campaign kicks off Qalqilya, Tulkarm liberated forever, Arafat proclaims

TULKARM, West Bank (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat wrapped up his tour of newly autonomous West Bank towns on Sunday, calling on thousands of residents in towns along the border with Israel to live in peace with their Jewish neighbours.

Mr. Arafat travelled by helicopter first to Qalqilya, located barely five kilometres from Tel Aviv's suburbs, then to Tulkarm, 20 kilometres to the north, declaring the towns "liberated forever" following the departure of Israeli troops in mid-December.

He was greeted in both towns by tens of thousands of cheering residents, many waving Palestinian flags or brandishing posters of Abu Ammar, Mr. Arafat's nom de guerre.

"You are living here in a strategic location," Mr. Arafat told Qalqilya residents gathered outside a football stadium.

"I ask you to maintain good neighbourly relations with those who have signed the peace agreements with

us," he said. "You all know that when Muslims give their word, they keep it."

Qalqilya and Tulkarm lie along Israel's 1967 border with the West Bank and are the westernmost of seven West Bank towns given self-rule by Israel ahead of historic Palestinian elections scheduled for Jan. 20.

The towns were handed over to Palestinian control as part of Israel's peace agreements with Mr. Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation. Other self-rule areas are in Bethlehem, Jenin, Jericho, Nablus and Ramallah, which Mr. Arafat visited for the first time on Saturday.

The arrival of Palestinian self-rule on the doorstep of Tel Aviv has sparked fears of an upsurge of crime and unrest among Jewish residents in nearby towns, where living standards are far higher than in Qalqilya or Tulkarm.

A sharp increase in car thefts has been reported in some areas near autonomous Palestinian territories and Israeli authorities earlier this month tried to build a fence

west of Qalqilya to control Palestinian movements.

But construction of the fence was blocked by local residents who depend economically on neighbouring Israeli towns and there was no sign Sunday of any resumed building activity in the area.

In both his Qalqilya and Tulkarm speeches, Mr. Arafat declared that the success of autonomy in the towns was proof that opponents to his partial self-rule accords with Israel were mistaken.

He also called on all Palestinians to vote in the Jan. 20 elections which will choose an 88-member self-rule council and a president of the autonomy government — a post Mr. Arafat is certain to win.

Mr. Arafat's election plans received a boost Sunday when four members of the hardline Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which is vehemently opposed to his autonomy policies, announced they would run in the council elections.

(Continued on page 7)

'Eritrea, Yemen determined to end island dispute'

ASMARA (AFP) — Eritrea and Yemen share a political will to settle their dispute over a strategic Red Sea island, over which they fought earlier this month, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali said Sunday.

"I'm pleased to note that the political will exists on both sides to resolve the issue by peaceful means," he said after talks with Eritrean President Issaias Afewerki in Asmara.

Dr. Ghali was in the Yemeni capital Sanaa on Saturday to discuss Hanish Al Kabir (Greater Hanish) island, which Eritrea seized on Dec. 18 after a three-day battle in which nine soldiers died.

"I did not discuss the substance, only the basic principles of solving the dispute peacefully," the U.N. chief said of his weekend talks.

As in Sanaa, he said that while the United Nations was ready to help, the best way for the dispute to be resolved was for the two sides to sit down together, or with regional neighbours, and work out their differences.

"I mentioned to the two

parties that I'm ready to extend my good offices to help the two countries to settle their differences," he said.

"I still hope that the issue could be resolved on a bilateral basis or in a regional arrangement," he said.

"Now we have to find the framework, the system, the process which will help us to implement this political will on both sides," he said.

Both sides claim the Hanish archipelago, which guards access to strategic Red Sea shipping lanes and whose ownership has never been formally decided by international convention.

Yemen demands that Eritrea withdraw its forces from Hanish Al Kabir as a precondition for bilateral talks.

On Saturday, the Eritrean government released more than 200 Yemeni prisoners in what was seen in Asmara as a goodwill gesture.

In an interview Sunday, Eritrean Foreign Minister Petros Solomon said mediation efforts already launched by Egypt and Ethiopia must continue, with the United Nations playing a key role at a later stage.

Peres: Talks positive

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres told his cabinet on Sunday that peace talks with Syria in the United States were positive and produced some understandings, a cabinet communiqué said.

"The prime minister emphasised the openness and the positive atmosphere of the talks and the understandings reached with the Syrian representatives on a number of issues," it said.

Israeli and Syrian representatives met for three days in Maryland for the first talks since Peres took office in November after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The delegations are due to meet again on Wednesday.

The parties have failed to make progress in four years of peace talks. Syria demands Israel withdraw from the Golan Heights. Israel insists on full peace ties and security arrangements on the strategic plateau.

Syrian chief negotiator Walid Al Mualem said earlier the talks were useful and serious but nothing had been agreed yet.



Two Palestinian boys peer through binoculars as they try to catch a glimpse of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat who is addressing tens of thousands of Palestinians during his first visit to the West Bank town of Tulkarm yesterday (AFP photo)

On New Year's Eve

Government, House on agreement

By Sae'da Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government Sunday responded favourably to deputies' demands and voted in favour of most of their proposals in one of the more heated sessions of the Lower House of Parliament in its present session.

Almost every demand made by lawmakers at the evening session on New Year's Eve was met with a favourable reply from Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and members of his Cabinet and asked the deputies to provide them with more details. However, a heated debate ensued sparked by the cancellation of the Palestine committee from the House's bylaws.

The committee, which had always been temporary, was not on the House's draft bylaws currently being discussed by the 80th lawmakers. While Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ra'ouf Rawabdeh fervently argued against the committee, he finally voted, along with the House for keeping it.

"We are with Palestine. (But) we don't express (our feelings) by the formation of a committee, but with honest

and hard work," said Mr. Rawabdeh. "If committees should be formed to every issue in the Arab World, then there ought to be committees for Sudan, Iraq, Yemen and Libya."

"It is not logical that a committee's only duties are to discuss the Palestinian issue," he continued. "If such a committee is to be formed it should be called the Jerusalem committee."

But leftist, rightist and centrist deputies as well as ministers who are also deputies argued in favour of the continuation of this committee's work.

Anwar Haidi, chairman of the Palestine Committee, said: "I hope the Palestinian issue would be solved and a Palestinian state be established. But the Jerusalem issue has not been solved yet and the refugees problems have not been tackled."

"I hope the committee would not be cancelled," he added.

Minister of Trade and Industry Ali Abul Ragheb said that the high number of committees should be reduced to make them more effective. However, he argued that the Palestine Committee should not be omitted.

Islamist deputies expressed anger at Mr. Rawabdeh's contentions and said that the cancellation of the committee had negative impact on the House's image and performance.

"We could not possibly have a committee on Jerusalem only. All the land of Palestine is sacred," said deputy Hammam Sa'eed of the Islamic Action Front bloc.

Leftist deputy Mustafa Shunkeik insisted that the committee was needed to tackle the refugees problems pointing out to what he described as a distinguished Jordanian-Palestinian relationship.

Mr. Rawabdeh, who did not make a reply to the deputies' contentions, finally voted with the House in favour of its inclusion in the House's draft bylaws.

In a question forwarded earlier by deputy Nazeem Amarine over what he described as the high prices of medicine, the government said that the issue had already been referred to the House's health committee and promised to take the appropriate measures as soon as the committee prepared its recommendations.

Barak visits tomorrow

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak will visit Jordan Tuesday, his first visit since he became foreign minister in November, where he will hold talks with Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and senior officials on bilateral relations and the outcome of the Syrian-Israeli talks, a spokesman at the Israeli embassy said Sunday.

The spokesman, Shalom Tourgeman, also said that during the one-day visit by the chief of the Israeli diplomacy, the two countries will "establish a working system between the two leaderships and will discuss the bilateral relations."

"The Syrian-Israeli talks will not be a major issue in Mr. Barak's talks with the Jordanian officials... but he will update them with the latest developments in the talks," Mr. Tourgeman said in a telephone interview with the Jordan Times.

On Dec. 28, Israeli and Syrian negotiators resumed talks in the United States, in a new attempt to break a deadlock in the peace talks between Damascus and Tel Aviv over Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Mr. Barak, a former Israeli army chief-of-staff, is expected to meet with His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker.

Mr. Barak visited Jordan in Oct. 26, 1994 as a member of the Israeli delegation who came to Wadi Araba to attend the signing ceremony of Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

On Dec. 24, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan visited Amman and met with Mr. Kabariti and Tourism Minister Abdul Ilah Al Khattib.

Meanwhile, Jordan's ambassador in Israel, Marwan Muasher, said in an interview with Jordan Television this week that relations with Tel Aviv is moving in the right direction.

He added that the two sides have signed at least 20 accords covering a wide range of issues in line with the peace agreement (see story on page 3).

5 new members join Security Council

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Britain takes over the presidency of the Security Council on Monday as five new states — Chile, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Poland and South Korea — join the 15-member body for two-year terms.

The new members will replace Argentina, the Czech Republic, Nigeria, Oman and Rwanda, whose two-year stint on the council expired at the end of 1995.

Five other non-permanent members who remain on the council until December 31, 1996 are Botswana, Germany, Honduras, Indonesia and Italy.

The council, responsible for international peace and security and whose decisions are binding, has five permanent members with veto power: the United States, Russia, Britain, China and France.

The presidency rotates alphabetically each month according to their English names and Britain, formally known as the United Kingdom, heads the group in January.

Its ambassador, Sir John Weston, takes over from Russia's chief envoy, Sergei Lavrov.

Turkey protests to Syria over Euphrates waters

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey Sunday forwarded a protest note to Syria, rejecting Damascus' claims that it is planning to reduce the flow rate of the Euphrates River and is contaminating the river's water, the foreign ministry said.

It said in a statement that the note submitted by Turkey's embassy in Damascus to Syrian authorities was a response to last week's protest note by Syria.

In the note Damascus criticised a Turkish plan to build a new dam on the Euphrates, saying this would reduce the flow rate of water into Syria, which is heavily dependent on the river's water. Syria also said Turkey's recent move to irrigate its arid lands in the south with the water of the Euphrates contaminated the river.

However, the Turkish note said the Syrian allegations were baseless. It added Ankara was still ready to listen to Syria's complaints and called on the Damascus government to discuss the water question.

In the long-running dispute

Syria urged Turkey to sign an agreement to "justly share the water of the Euphrates."

Turkey, which pledged in the late 1980s to provide Syria with a flow rate of at least 500 cubic metres per second, says the issue should be discussed for a rational solution to the problem, but rejects Damascus' property claims envisaging a formal sharing of the river's water.

Six members of the Arab League last week made a statement in support of Syria, urging Turkey to accept formal sharing of the Euphrates water.

Ankara also accuses Syria of supporting a Kurdish rebellion, fighting for an independent state in southeastern Turkey.

"Everybody knows that leader (Abdullah Ocalan) of the PKK (the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party) has taken refuge in Damascus, his address and telephone number are publicly known," Turkish Foreign Minister Deniz Baykal told reporters in Ankara Saturday.

However, the Turkish note said the Syrian allegations were baseless. It added Ankara was still ready to listen to Syria's complaints and called on the Damascus government to discuss the water question.

In the face of their refusal, security forces were forced to storm the house, resulting in the neutralisation of the seven criminals...

Violence broke out in Algeria between Muslim

guerrillas and government forces shortly after the authorities, in January 1992, scrapped a general election which the Islamists were poised to win.

22 rebels killed

Meanwhile, the Algerian security forces surrounded a Muslim fundamentalist hide-out and killed seven rebels inside after they refused to surrender during search operations last week, AFS said on Sunday.

Another five guerrillas were shot dead in a clash in the eastern region of Constantine, with a further 10 being killed singly or in groups of two or three in other regions.

Describing the deaths of the seven in Ain Defla, 130 kilometres southwest of Algiers, AFS said security forces "acting on information gathered after a criminal was arrested last Wednesday... immediately surrounded the house and ordered its occupants to surrender."

"In the face of their refusal, security forces were forced to storm the house, resulting in the neutralisation of the seven criminals..."

Violence broke out in Algeria between Muslim

Palestinian press fears Arafat, freed editor says

Palestinian journalists have of angering Mr. Arafat.

Mr. Alami said he "never expected such a reaction" for not running a story where Mr. Arafat wanted.

"I am very sorry for this entire affair. Democracy is not something that you just talk about. It is also something you must practise. Palestinian society is not yet practising democracy," Mr. Alami said.

Mr. Alami's arrest angered Palestinian and international journalists who called it an interference with editorial freedom.

The international press watchdog group Reporters Without Borders and the Arab Journalists Association sent letters to Mr. Arafat last week demanding the release of Mr. Alami, who has been an editor at Al Quds for some 20 years.

Al Quds and other Jerusalem and Gaza-based newspapers have been closed more than once and several journalists were arrested in the past 18 months under Palestinian rule.



Beleaguered Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani told top officials met with Mr. Dostam in his northern stronghold Mazar-i-Sharif at the weekend, the Uzbek chief spokesman here, Sibghatullah Zaki, said. Mr. Dostam brought a message from Rabbani that he is ready for negotiations personally with all Afghan parties and groups," Mr. Zaki said.

Mr. Dostam told the visitors Mr. Rabbani would be welcome in Mazar if he cannot be president but as leader of his Jamiat-i-Islami faction, he said the spokesman for the Uzbek leader's National Islamic Movement (NIM).

In fact Mr. Rabbani had planned to travel to Mazar-i-Sharif himself and 100 security guards had been flown to the city from Kabul, but the were turned back because there would have meant a presidential trip, Mr. Zaki said.

Mr. Zaki said a response from Kabul was expected after the envoys report back to Mr. Rabbani on the Mazar-i-Sharif talks.

The Kabul delegation, which consisted of Abdul Rahman, minister of aviation, Abdul Aziz Moradian, presidential spokesman, and Maulvi Abdul Aziz, a senior official — returned Saturday to the spokesman said.

He quoted Mr. Dostam as telling the emissaries that Mr. Rabbani would be given full protection during his visit to Mazar-i-Sharif. "We are ready to resolve the crisis through negotiations involving all parties," Mr. Dostam

Walid was six when he spoke of his past life during a trip with his father Hani Hamad, a travelling salesman, in the Hasbaya area.

Entering a wealthy house he suddenly proclaimed: "I want to see my wife Zahia and my only son Salem."

Persuaded by the minute detail he supplied, Zahia, now in her 60s, sent for the Christian mayor of the village.

"You are George, the mayor. You shaved off my beard under the oak tree and during a hunt I killed

ROME (R) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi said he did not regard U.S. President Bill Clinton as an enemy but warned that if his country were attacked he would strike mainland Italy.

Clinton was in Rome like former U.S. President Ronald Reagan," Mr. Qadhafi said in an interview given to a group of Italian journalists visiting the Libyan capital Tripoli and printed in a number of Italian newspapers on Sunday.

"He is not an aggressive person. Between us there is incomprehension but not war," he was quoted as saying through an interpreter.

In 1986 U.S. warplanes bombed Libya in retaliation for alleged backing by Mr. Qadhafi of international terrorism. Immediately afterwards, Libya launched a missile at the southern Italian island of Lampedusa.

NICOSIA (R) — Iranian deputies chanting "death to the U.S." interrupted a move to open parliament on Monday to set up a special fund to fight American "conspiracies" against Islamic countries, the Iranian news agency IRNA said.

It said parliament speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri urged deputies to work on a special budget for the information ministry to tackle what he called "U.S. conspiracies against Islamic countries, Iran in particular."

His remark in parliament "met with enthusiastic welcome of more than 200 deputies who responded by chanting 'death to the U.S.,"' the agency said. He also called for a parliamentary study on "Washington-sponsored terrorism in Islamic countries."

Iran has objected to moves in the U.S. Congress to allow

inspective of the 'good or bad' had committed in the past. The child who speaks of his past life is a proud asset to a Druze village, but among the dozens of reported cases are children who claim they came to a bloody end in their previous existence. Ramzi was just five years old when he had a revelation as he arrived at a wedding 15 kilometres from his home and spotted a Kalashnikov rifle fixed to a wall next to a man's portrait.

"That's me, Issam Muzannar. I was killed in an Israeli air raid. I want to save my daughter, Salwa, she is now two years old," he exclaimed.

To prove his story, he asked for help to dig up a secret cache of ammunition buried under an olive tree in the garden. Three cases were uncovered with the first dig of the spade.

Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 633785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623345
De in Salis Church Tel. 661757
Terraviva Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623345
Anglican Church Tel. 652626
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 717131.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775211.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 834326.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel.679691.
The Evangelical Church in Amman Tel. 811295

Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680103

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Intermediate	
Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	639977
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Black Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Safety Department	605051
Hotel Complaints	605080
Price Complaints	681176
Water and Sewerage	
Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality	
Complaints	787111
Telephone Information	
(directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone	

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813613/2
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amn 64281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 64244/12
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Makhsine, Sheimsani 607071
Sheimsani Hospital 669131
Al-Yahsi Hospital 845945
Al-Walsher Hospital 6672719
The Islamic, Abadi 66612737
Al-Ahli, Abadi 66161846
Italian, Al-Majma 7710113
Al-Bashir, J. Asrafieh 77511126
Army, Marka 89161115
Queen Alia Hospital 60224004
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab, Chabab

Princess Haya Hospital (03)31411

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Flights
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**Flights
(Terminal 1)**

09:55 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
18:40 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

15:00 Muscat, Abu Dhabi	(GF)
15:30 Vienna	(OS)
15:30 Kiev	(6U)
19:00 Paris, Damascus	(AF)
22:45 Athens, Beirut	(OA)
23:05 London	(BA)
01:20 Amsterdam	(KL)

06:15	Beirut (RJ)
11:00	Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05	Frankfurt, London (RJ)
12:15	Cairo (RJ)
12:25	Frankfurt (RJ)
13:15	Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
13:45	Damascus (RJ)
14:00	Abu Dhabi (RJ)
14:15	Dubai, Muscat (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

Apple	700/50
Asparagus	680/
Banana (Mukammar)	620/
Banana (Imported)	880/70
Cabbage	100/50
Carrot	260/50
Cauliflower	110/20
Cucumbers (large)	330/220
Cucumbers (small)	200/100
Eggplant	720/50
Garlic	220/150
Grape Fruit	250/180
London	330/80
Marrow (large)	230/150
Marrow (small)	230/150
Onion (green)	350/50
Onion (dry)	260/180
Orange	260/180
Pepper (hot)	260/180
Pepper (sweet)	260/180
Potato	150/80
Radish	120/80
Spinach	330/450
String Beans	270/200

Cabinet approves new tourism marketing strategy

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Tourism Khatib Sunaid said the Higher Tourism Council has approved a proposal for the reorganisation of tourism marketing as a profession that needs to be further developed to meet current and future needs in the tourism industry.

Addressing a meeting of the Higher Tourism Council, the minister said the council tentatively discussed three plans to modernise tourism legislations: reorganising the operating mechanisms of tourism and travel agents, re-classifying tourist restaurants and, finally, reviving the traditional crafts industry.

Mr. Khatib emphasised the need for the ministry to revise plans to market Jordan abroad, in particular with countries known to send large groups of tourists to Jordan.

He proposed that such plans be closely coordinated

with Royal Jordanian (RJ) airlines along with tourist and travel agencies.

Also addressing the meeting, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker called on the ministry to benefit from the experiences and tourist facilities of other countries that have achieved successful tourism policies.

The prime minister stressed that any decisions in this respect should be based on in-depth and thorough studies, saying that such studies should be able to convey figures and facts to investors to enable the country to cope with the growing number of tourist groups arriving to the Kingdom.

Sharif Zeid said proper tourist services are bound to contribute to highlighting the Kingdom's wealth of historical and archaeological treasures.

Promoting tourism can be done, the prime minister said, through concerted

efforts on the part of the public and the private sectors to work out programmes attractive to tourists and which would market Jordan's archaeological treasures abroad.

Sharif Zeid urged the ministry to recruit and employ well-trained and qualified tourist guides.

The prime minister also called for better facilities for travellers crossing bridges and crossing points at the country's borders.

The council, which is chaired by the prime minister, includes the ministers of finance, industry and trade, health, interior, planning, culture, tourism and antiquities as well as the Aqaba Region Authority president, RJ chief executive officer, the directors of the Social Security Corporation and the hotel training institute, and Munir Nassar and Nadim Muasher from the private tourism sector.

Premier briefs Cabinet on Mubarak

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Saturday briefed the Council of Ministers, which met under his chairmanship, on the outcome of negotiations on bilateral relations between His Majesty King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Sharif Zeid told the Cabinet that the meeting between both leaders was fruitful and constructive and had helped clarify a number of issues.

He said both leaders agreed on an action plan to restore pan-Arab relations within a strategic perspective that would safeguard pan-Arab interests and guarantee regional security.

The prime minister noted that the two leaders said they were satisfied with the progress of the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, adding that the two leaders' views were identical on the need for joint action aimed at preventing any partition of Iraq and ending the Iraqi people's sufferings.

The Council of Ministers also listened to a report by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on the outcome of a visit to Jordan by Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yousef Ben Alawi and his meetings with the King and the prime minister.

The foreign minister said the talks revealed the nature of views on Arab and inter-

national affairs. The Cabinet also announced its approval of the registration of six new insurance companies which altogether have a capital of JD 18 million.

These companies are: The Arab Insurers Company, the Jordanian-International Insurance company, Al Sager Insurance Company, Amman Insurance Company, the Islamic Insurance Company and the Arab-German Insurance Company.

With the new addition, the Cabinet statement said, the total number of insurance companies operating in Jordan rises to 23.

The Cabinet also announced its approval of extending an exemption from customs fees for another six months on all paper imported by the Al Ra'i, Al Dustour and Al Aswaq Arabic dailies, and set up a delegation led by the secretary general of the Ministry of Information to take part in a standing Arab Information Committee meeting to be held in Cairo on Jan. 9.

The Council of Ministers approved the publication of commemorative stamps in 1996 for HRH Crown Prince Hassan's 50th birthday and the Kingdom's 50th independence anniversary.

The cabinet also approved technical and capital assistance to be provided by



Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Saturday briefs the Cabinet on the outcome of negotiations between His Majesty King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (Petra photo)

Germany. The assistance amounts to 30 million deutschmarks which will be arriving in the form of loans to be repaid over 40 years at three to four per cent interest rates and with a grace period of 10 years.

German assistance will finance the second stage of a water network project for the Greater Amman area in addition to 12 million deutschmarks to be spent on water, developing the environment and promoting science and technology education in Jordan.

The Council of Ministers

also announced its approval of the retirement of four senior Public Security Department (PSD) officers and the appointment of three officers to key PSD positions.

A Cabinet statement said the following senior police officers were retired as of Jan. 5, 1996: Major General Mohammad Said Tarazi, the PSD's inspector general, Major General Abdullah Hussein Hababbeh, PSD assistant director for judicial affairs, Maj. Gen. Abdul Karim Tarawneh,

director of personnel affairs, and Maj. Gen. Abdul Hamid Irshaid, director of the Karak police department.

The Cabinet approved the appointment of the following officers: Maj. Gen. Mohammad Basoul as assistant PSD director general for administration affairs and PSD inspector general, Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Abdul Hadi Saraiheb as assistant PSD director for judicial affairs, and Maj. Gen. Ahmad Saleh Dmour as assistant PSD director for traffic affairs.

Prosecution sums up sabotage case

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Military prosecutors Sunday summed up their case against six suspects accused of sabotage, opening the way for the defence to begin its argument.

The State Security Court headed by Colonel Hafez Amin, was presented with a file implicating the defendants of plotting subversion in Jordan and of belonging to an illegal organisation.

State Prosecutor General Captain Samih Majali told the court that the file contains the defendants' own testimonies, the seized explosives and weapons and a copy of the 1994 law endorsing the peace treaty with Israel.

Attorney Kamal Nasser, who was speaking on behalf of the other three attorneys representing the six defendants Sunday contested the prosecution's file questioning the legality of some of the procedures that were taken during the interrogation.

He charged that the defendants were interrogated under duress and that their confessions were taken without the signature of the stenographer which he stated "is

an obligation," according to the law.

Dr. Nasser also said the evidence (the explosives) which was confiscated by authorities was not handled properly.

The court however, rejected the defence request and decided to accept the prosecution's file.

The group, which started gathering members in 1990, is charged with planning to carry out attacks against foreigners in Jordan using explosives and automatic weapons.

But the group was apprehended before they actually carried out any attack.

The six defendants, who pleaded not guilty in October, are also charged with illegal possession and manufacturing of explosive materials, automatic weapons and guns for illegal use, and belonging to an illegal organisation.

Prosecutor witnesses included a police officer and an explosives expert.

During the court session, the tribunal heard the testimony of Captain Ahmad Faris Kurdi of the Irbid Police Department, who was called on for the second time to testify after attorneys objected over one of the pieces of evidence, a red bag,

which was not included with the evidence presented at court.

Capt. Kurdi told the court it was the same bag he seized along with other primitive explosives found in a cave close to the home of the fourth defendant, Khalid Mohammad Mustafa Kilani in the town of Hikma in Irbid. He added that the bag, along with the explosives, was buried 50 centimetres underground in the cave.

The defence is trying to prove that the explosives allegedly found with their clients were made available by a person from a neighbouring country.

According to the defence, their clients gathered the materials to protect themselves during the Gulf War in 1991, "in case war began in Jordan," and that when the war was over, their clients buried the explosives to get rid of them.

Dr. Nasser asked the court to postpone the session to allow time for the defence to present their witnesses. Dr. Nasser added that the six defendants "might testify in their own case."

Judge Amin set Jan. 4, to start hearing the defence witnesses.

Man receives six-month prison sentence for 'honour' crime

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A 22-year-old Sahab man was sentenced last week by the Criminal Court to a six-month prison term for the murder of his married sister on July 25.

Suleiman Ismael, who pleaded not guilty to the charges of shooting his sister Aysha I. 26, in her house in Sahab, benefited from a reduction in the penalty, according to the court because he committed the crime in a fit of fury to "cleanse his family's honour."

Both Aysha's family and husband had dropped their charges against Suleiman.

According to court documents, the victim, Aysha, had, prior to her marriage, an alleged affair with a married man. Her family discovered the relationship after she was married, the document added.

The victim and the married man recorded some of their encounters on video tapes, the court said. It added that the tapes were discovered by the wife of the victim's lover, after Aysha was married.

Court papers said the wife took the video tape to an Islamic judge to seek a

divorce, and at the same time "one video tape was left at the door of Suleiman's house."

The court paper said that Suleiman watched the video, lost his temper, went to his sister's house in Sahab and shot her at least 10 times.

According to court documents, Aysha's husband had knowledge of his wife's previous affair and that he had forgiven her. At court, however, he dropped charges against Suleiman.

According to the court, Aysha's lover fled to Iraq after she was killed by her brother.

Ministry employees stage sit-in against status change

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A group of 40 people employed by the Ministry of Education as school guards held a sit-in before the Parliament Sunday in protest against the ministry's decision to change their status to janitors and messengers at their schools.

The protesters, who held posters with slogans calling for the rescindment of the ministry's decision, had earlier signed a memorandum which they presented to Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker requesting his intervention.

The memorandum noted that many of the guards had donated plots of land for the construction of these schools and that changing their status to janitors was unjust.

The protesters requested the prime minister to cancel the ministry's decision.

According to the ministry's secretary gener-

al, Izzat Jaradat, there are altogether 600 school guards employed by the ministry, which took this decision in June 1995.

Dr. Jaradat told the Jordan Times that the decision was taken by the ministry after it was found that guards were not effective in their jobs as guards and were failing in their duties.

The ministry decided to re-evaluate the guards' positions to that of janitors and messengers in their respective schools. Dr. Jaradat added they may be asked to serve as guards in accordance with the schools' particular needs.

He said that should the guards' memorandum be referred to the Ministry of Education from the prime minister, it will be dealt with by the concerned department.



'BACKGROUND' READING: A woman enjoys her reading leisure time amongst a scenic setting in the ancient ruins of Jabal Al Qal'a (Photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Jordan-Israeli post-peace ties have created truer understanding between both societies — Dr. Muasher

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's ambassador in Tel Aviv Marwan Muasher has said the presence of an embassy in Israel is highly important for Arabs in order for them to know more about Israel during the peace era in the Middle East.

"The presence of a (Jordanian) embassy in Israel is in my opinion very important. We knew nothing about Israel before the peace treaty. And all we actually knew was a fraction of the truth," Dr. Muasher told Jordan Television in an interview this week that was printed in Al Dustour daily yesterday.

"This is the first time that a continuous Jordanian presence is maintained and is providing us with a chance to understand what really happens in Israeli society. And the reality of Israeli society is completely different from the image we had in our minds in the past."

He said there were several aspects of Israeli society that Arabs were not aware of, including Arab Israelis, for example "of whom we had forged a false image."

Dr. Muasher said the issue of Jordanian property in Israel needed a long time before a solution could be found but that the Jordanian government is exerting all possible

efforts to solve it.

After the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli treaty in October 1994, a new law was enacted in Israel whereby any Jordanian has the right to own property in Israel, according to Dr. Muasher.

"But this is not enough," he said. "This law should be applied to all Jordanians who owned land before October 1994. If the Israeli government is not going to acknowledge this right after the treaty, then when is the time to do that?"

Dr. Muasher said there were positive signs regarding the release of Jordanians detained in Israeli prisons since 1987 who number 40.

"Israel released hundreds of Palestinian prisoners after the September 1993 Oslo agreement. In turn, we want the same treatment for Jordanian prisoners."

"We have made long strides in this regard, and I expect that the release of the first group of these detainees will be carried out very soon."

An important element in the Jordanian-Israeli relationship, according to Dr. Muasher, was the signing of the trade agreement which, he said, will help create a favourable economic environment in the

region.

"It is now possible to export Jordanian goods to Israel and Israeli goods to Jordan," he said.

Asked about the implications of normalisation of relations with Israel on the Arabs at large and on Jordan in particular, Dr. Muasher said:

"The word normalisation has become associated with negative implications. What I want to say in this respect is that the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty has been endorsed by the Jordanian government and Parliament. We cannot go back but we can contribute to creating a new environment that brings benefits to the Jordanian citizen."

"And the citizen at the end is free whether to establish relations with Israel or not," he continued.

He said all layers of the Israeli society have accepted peace with Jordan. Not only that, but Israeli intellectuals and the society in general have feelings of appreciation towards Jordanians and their leadership.

Dr. Muasher said he regretted that Arab treatment to Arab Israelis in the past was not right.

"Arab society has committed a

grave mistake regarding the Arab citizens of Israel," he said. "These are citizens who have been steadfast in Israel since 1948. While we described them as traitors they have worked hard to maintain their Arab identity despite all pressures exerted on them."

"After peace with Jordan, Arab Israelis feel that the doors have been opened wide again for them. They have the desire to cooperate with Jordan and establish a good relationship with it. We should have this same desire."

Regarding Israeli-Syrian peace talks, Dr. Muasher said there were positive signs that current negotiations would witness a breakthrough in the near future.

"The general atmosphere, even in Israel, has changed. I believe there is a non-declared readiness for a complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights that is met by a readiness on the Syrian front to establish normal relations with Israel that are similar to the Jordanian-Israeli ties," he said.

Northern Irish MPs look to pressure weakened Major

LONDON (R) — Northern Irish Protestant politicians, sensing they could become pivotal to the chances of John Major surviving 1996 in office, Sunday prepared to put new pressure on his enfeebled government.

A dramatic announcement Friday by Conservative MP Emma Nicholson that she was defecting to the Liberal Democrats reduced Mr. Major's parliamentary majority to just three.

Two pending by-elections look certain to reduce it to one, and since several Conservative members of parliament are in poor health, Mr. Major could be heading a minority government within months.

If so, the British prime minister, who is desperate to avoid an early general election with the Conservatives 30 points behind the opposition Labour Party in the polls, will be reliant on nine official Ulster Unionist MPs to sustain him in

office.

The party's deputy leader, John Taylor, promised it would not precipitate a premature general election providing the government "continues governing in the best interests of the U.K. in general and Northern Ireland in particular".

But another unionist MP, Ken Maginnis, told the Sunday Times: "What we would expect is that throughout the Conservative Party there will be a greater awareness of the Ulster Unionist presence and our significance within the house."

The Unionists are seeking to ensure Britain maintains its policy of refusing to allow Sinn Fein to join in talks on the political future of Northern Ireland until the Irish Republican Army (IRA) surrenders illegal arms and explosives.

Sinn Fein, the IRA's political arm, has so far refused to countenance this idea.

The British and Irish governments have now appointed an international commission headed by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell to try to resolve the issue, which has stalled efforts to convert guerrilla ceasefires into permanent peace.

Britain has promised to consider any solution the three-man body may come up with, but has not guaranteed to accept its judgement.

Mr. Major's parliamentary position could worsen still further if more Conservative legislators on the left of the party follow Ms. Nicholson's example and walk out.

The mail on Sunday newspaper said this was a distinct possibility because of the disillusionment felt by some party left-wingers at what they saw as a rightward shift on issues such as the European Union, immigration and social policy. Former Conservative Prime Minister Edward

Heath, a firm pro-European, wrote in the paper of Ms. Nicholson's move: "Others may be tempted to follow the same course, thus precipitating a general election."

And it quoted an unnamed moderate as saying: "We are losing the battle for its (the party's) soul, which is shifting rightwards. There are probably one or two who are thinking about leaving."

Ms. Nicholson herself said in an article for the Observer newspaper: "Rather than my leaving the Conservative Party...The modern harsh and uncaring Conservative Party has left me."

But Mr. Major made it clear he intended to battle on into 1997 — he must call an election by May of that year. In a New Year message to his party, he said he will "not be blown off course, come hell or high water."



American conductor Lorin Maazel conducts the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra during the rehearsal of the traditional New Year concert to be performed on Jan. 1 (AFP photo)

Stay out of politics, Bhutto tells clerics

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has told Islamic leaders to stay out of politics, but the religious parties who called a general strike against her vowed Sunday to pursue their protests.

Following Saturday's general strike called by the multi-party Milli Yekjehati Council (MYC) to protest at what they call Bhutto's promotion of "Western secularism," the prime minister said "ulema" religious scholars should devote themselves to religious and moral teaching.

"They should play a constructive role, promote moral and religious values and convey the message of Islam," she told reporters, but emphasised that "politics should be left to politicians."

Twice elected, in 1988 and in 1993, to lead the Islamic nation despite opposition from religious figures who said a woman ruler would be anti-Islamic, Ms. Bhutto last month accused clerics of pursuing an "agenda of political tyranny."

In her remarks Saturday night, she said the general strike call got a "lukewarm" response, dismissing MYC claims that it was a "complete success."

Most national newspapers said there had been a partial impact and that the opposition front's threat to bring communications to a halt had failed.

Ms. Bhutto rejected accusations that her policy was anti-Islamic. She recalled that the nation's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, had faced similar criticism from clerics during the independence movement which led to the creation of Pakistan in 1947.

But, the 70-year old MYC chairman, Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani, said Sunday that the scholars had played a major role in the struggle for Pakistan's independence.

He said the council would decide its future line of action at a meeting in January.

"No one can deny ulema's right to participate in politics. Pakistan's constitution says Islam is the state religion and we have to defend the country's Islamic identity which is being eroded by Bhutto," he told AFP.

Mr. Noorani said Ms. Bhutto's government would not complete its five-year term to October 1998. He vowed: "1996 will be election year in Pakistan."

The MYC, which came together early in 1995 to promote sectarian harmony, is seen by many to have drifted from its apolitical agenda to pursue political ambitions with an eye on next elections.

New elections have also become the rallying cry of the country's main opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML), headed by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

"This is the only solution to Pakistan's current problems," Mr. Sharif told a public meeting Saturday at Lodhran in Punjab province, his power base.

The PML accuses Ms. Bhutto of economic mismanagement and blames her for rising inflation, corruption. It says she is carrying out a vendetta against political opponents.

Analysts say the MYC, which groups about a dozen parties, is trying to emerge as a third political force.

The MYC leader said there was no plan yet to turn the organisation into an electoral alliance, though its parties could forge platforms among them. The religious parties bagged only a few per cent vote in the 1993 ballot.

"Our goal is to block the onslaught of Western secularism and culture which Bhutto is promoting," Mr. Noorani said.

The public is becoming increasingly concerned about soaring inflation which has become its number one preoccupation.

"I think this is where the Bhutto government has failed," a taxi driver here said.

Kim Young-Sam wishes N. Koreans hope in 1996

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam told North Koreans in a New Year's speech that he hoped they would "regain hope and happiness" in 1996.

"I sincerely hope that in 1996 our fellow Koreans in North Korea who are suffering untold pain and difficulties will regain hope and happiness," Mr. Kim said in the speech scheduled for delivery Monday but published Sunday.

The North is reportedly suffering severe food shortages brought about by flooding on top of successive bad harvests, and South Korean Foreign Minister Gong Ro-Myung Saturday indicated that Seoul could

resume food aid. Mr. Gong told journalists here that South Korea would discuss the matter with the United States and Japan in a meeting in Hawaii slated for January 24-25.

Only if it could be determined that the food situation in the North was as dire as spelled out by some foreign relief agencies, and if it could be ensured that none of the aid was diverted to the military, would a resumption of rice shipments be possible, he said.

South Korea sent 150,000 tonnes of rice free to North Korea between June and September, but a series of incidents including the brief detention of the crew of one

rice aid ship and the prolonged detention of five fishermen, soured chances of further talks.

Some South Korean and U.S. experts have cast doubt on the extent of the food shortages in rigidly isolationist North Korea, pointing out that aid agencies have had restricted access to flood-damaged areas and pointing out that military exercises appear unaffected.

South Korean troops have been on heightened alert in the past month after reports that the North Korean air force had moved some 80 warplanes closer to the demilitarised zone in October, and left them there.

Murayama set to bow out as Japan faces new year turmoil

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan faces a new year of political turmoil as Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama has come under growing pressure to quit while new opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa has vowed to bring down the government.

One likely scenario for 1996 was given by a leading local daily Sunday as it reported that Mr. Murayama and his coalition partners — Trade Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura — had agreed on Mr. Murayama's power transfer to Mr. Hashimoto.

Mr. Murayama heads the Social Democratic Party (SDP) which has only 63 seats in the powerful lower house, while Mr. Hashimoto's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) occupies 209 of the 511 seats in the chamber. Mr. Takemura's new party Sakigake is the smallest among the three ruling parties with 22 seats.

The Yomiuri daily went on to say that the 71-year-old premier was expected to step down after parliament passes budget bills for the year from April and probably following U.S. President Bill Clinton's scheduled visit on April 16 and Mr. Murayama's trip from April 19 to Russia to attend a nuclear power safety conference.

The coalition leaders have also reportedly agreed to dissolve the lower house for a snap general elections

when Mr. Hashimoto takes charge.

But they will wait for at least three months after he takes power to allow the less powerful SDP and Sakigake to prepare for the elections, the Yomiuri said.

Mr. Murayama, who has said he had never dreamt of becoming prime minister, took office in June 1994 after the LDP persuaded the SDP to form a coalition by offering the top job to its chairman.

Although the uneasy right-left coalition managed to cope with a series of crises which hit Japan in 1995, including a killer earthquake in Kobe and terrorist attacks by the doomsday cult Aum Supreme Truth, it has been widely speculated in the media that the weary Murayama is ready to resign.

Mr. Hashimoto, 58, known as a tough negotiator in Japan-U.S. trade talks, replaced Foreign Minister Yohei Kono as LDP head in September, raising hopes among party members that they had at last elected a powerful leader.

Public support for the Murayama cabinet has been declining for months to new lows of below 30 per cent as voters complained of a lack of leadership in such issues as the row over U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

The cabinet's latest move to use 685 billion yen (\$6.7 billion) in taxpayers' money to bail out the banking sector, burdened with huge

non-performing loans, was particularly unpopular.

Mr. Ozawa, who was elected as the head of the key opposition New Frontier Party (NFP) last week, told Japanese reporters Saturday that his party would grill the ruling coalition over the bail-out package during the next parliamentary session starting in January.

"Our first step will be to drive the Murayama cabinet into a corner by arguing against its policy measures," Mr. Ozawa said. "We want to corner the cabinet to dissolve the parliament as quickly as possible for a snap general elections."

The opposition leader hinted that the NFP may submit a no-confidence motion against the Murayama cabinet after the new budget is passed by the parliament.

Mr. Ozawa, 53, was long seen as a power-broker in Japan's political world before he declared his candidacy for the leadership race of the NFP, the second-biggest party after the LDP with 170 seats in the lower house.

He beat former Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata in the race despite some criticism of his aggressive campaign pledges to increase consumption tax from three per cent to 10 per cent over 10 years, and to form a new military force for United Nations work.

Kashmir hostages sighted last week — agency

NEW DELHI (R) — Four Western tourists held hostage by guerrillas in the troubled northern Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir were sighted last week in Anantnag district in southern Kashmir, the United News of India (UNI) said Sunday.

The UNI quoted reports from Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir, saying that the hostages were accompanied by about 20 armed men and were wearing warm clothes, and looked healthy. No further details were given.

American Donald Hutchings, German Dirk Hasert and Britons Keith Mangan and Paul Wells were kidnapped by Al-Farans militants while trekking in the mountains of southern Kashmir in early July.

A fifth hostage, Norwegian Hans Christian Ostroe, was found beheaded on Aug. 13 in a remote Kashmiri forest.

Indian officials in Kashmir negotiating the release of the four hostages were last contacted by the Al-Farans on Nov. 26.

Al-Farans, unknown before the kidnappings, has demanded the release of 15 jailed separatists including three Pakistanis from the Harkat-ul-Ansar militant group.

India has refused to bow to the militants' demands and ruled out a rescue raid for the fear of endangering the hostages' lives.

Several militant groups are fighting Delhi's rule in Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state. According to police and hospital sources more than 20,000 people have been killed in a rebellion that erupted in 1990.

Residents will leave Hong Kong if autonomy threatened — Patten

HONG KONG (AFP) — China has told Hong Kong it will enjoy a "glorious tomorrow" under Chinese rule, the day after Governor Chris Patten warned that residents will leave if their autonomy is threatened, reports said Saturday.

In his new year greeting, Zhou Nan, director of Xinhua news agency, China's de-facto government representative in the colony, called on the people of Hong Kong to work towards a smooth handover to China in 1997.

"I believe, under the powerful support of the motherland and in the mutual endeavours of the compatriots in Hong Kong, we can overcome all barriers to guarantee Hong Kong's smooth transition and handover," he said.

"Hong Kong will have a glorious tomorrow," he declared, assuring that China would maintain the territory's high autonomy after 1997 under the "one country, two systems" policy.

But speaking in a radio interview Friday, Governor Chris Patten warned of a fresh exodus of residents if a recently formed committee charged with overseeing the handover did not provide sufficient guarantees.

"If people start to doubt whether Hong Kong really will have a high degree of independence after 1997, then they may decide to go abroad," he said, adding there was little London could now do to reassure people about the future.

Gov. Patten stressed that the local and international communities expected greater reassurances from China on the continuation of a successful free and open society after the handover.

He said the recently formed preparatory committee would have to avoid the mistakes made by its predecessor, the preliminary working committee, which included a recommendation to water down the territory's bill of rights.

Flying saucer detected over S. Korean city

SEOUL (AFP) — A doughnut-shaped "flying saucer" glowed for an hour over a provincial city park Saturday night, attracting a crowd of awed onlookers and cameramen, news reports said Sunday. The strange object emitted a wave of luminous red light from its centre and moved slowly and soundlessly over a hilly park in the southern city of Taegu. Yonhap news agency said Television and radio stations were swamped with telephone calls by witnesses who claimed it was an unidentified flying object (UFO). Yonhap said. An air force surveillance team in the city also saw the glowing saucer through binoculars but failed to detect it on a radar screen, it said. Many people in the city were reported to have photographed the saucer.

Man offers to father Madonna's child

WASHINGTON (AFP) — It was bound to happen. After pop singer Madonna announced recently she wants to have a baby, a formal offer has hit the news pages — in a full-page advertisement, no less. A man describing himself as Eddie from Cincinnati (Ohio) offered to father a son or daughter of Madonna in an ad placed in New York's Village Voice. "Give me 45 seconds and I'll give you 1.5 billion reasons to have a child with me," it read. The 1.5 million figures refers to last Eddie's fertility count. "We're talking dinner, a movie, the whole nine yards," Eddie declared. "I'm from midwestern stock; I figure she's sick of the simmering Euro-flakes she's been with."

Kennedy Jr. is toast of diner

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Favourite American son John F. Kennedy Jr. delighted patrons of the Oval Room Restaurant in Washington this week. According to the Washington Post, Mr. Kennedy asked restaurant owner Askok Bajaj to locate his parents — the late President John F. Kennedy and wife Jackie — in a mural that depicts a party scene at the White House. "Everyone in the restaurant just went, 'wow,'" Mr. Bajaj told the daily. The owner then asked the young Kennedy, editor of the light-hearted political magazine George, to autograph the mural. He demurred, saying he'd like to run it.

Farmer's wife knits testicle-wrappers for prize bulls — report

Toronto (AFP) — The idea struck her — or, to be more precise, struck her family's prize Angus bull — when Saskatchewan gale was blowing at minus 25, Fahrenheit. The prize bull, worth up to 100,000 dollars (nearly \$75,000), had only one role to play — and he couldn't rise to the occasion if his testicles were frozen. So the Globe and Mail newspaper reports, Saturday, Marge Grenier invented "oyster ovens" — hand-knit gloves for the bull's precious parts. "This thing is," she told the newspaper, "if he freezes them, he's hamburger. Oyster ovens are named after a local delicacy: prairie oysters, which are served in the best restaurants. According to the Globe and Mail reporter, prairie oysters — or fric-bull testicles — taste "a little like veal." But, on medical advice, Ms. Grenier is holding off mass production of her oyster ovens because, it appears, the may warm up the bull's jewels too much — making his semen as valueless as frozen sperm. Ms. Grenier said veterinarians are looking at her idea to see how it can be modified to keep the bull's vital organs cool without getting too hot.

Tamil Tigers step up attacks amid peace talks offer

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil guerrillas raided an army island base Sunday, killing four soldiers and losing three of their own men as Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga renewed an offer of peace talks, officials said.

Guerrillas of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) carried out the pre-dawn raid on the Buffalo Island army detachment in the eastern district of Batticaloa, triggering a heavy fire fight, official sources said.

"The Tigers managed to kill four sentries and wound another three soldiers. At least three Tigers were killed in the counter-offensive and their bodies were recovered by the army," an official said.

An LTTE guerrilla strapped with explosives had set himself off against an army truck in the same district but failed to kill any soldiers in a kamikaze-style attack less than a day earlier.

The stepped-up attacks came as Ms. Kumaratunga in remarks published Sunday said that the government will have no alternative but to militarily crush the LTTE if the rebels do not enter peace talks.

"It is up to the LTTE to come for negotiations," Ms. Kumaratunga said in an interview with the state-run Sunday Observer.

"However, if they carry out attacks, we will not hesitate to defend the people and the country," she said.

Ms. Kumaratunga announced last month that the LTTE should make a "substantial surrender of arms" if they are to resume talks with the government in a bid to end the protracted conflict which has claimed over 50,000 lives since 1972.

For their part, the LTTE maintains that the army

should withdraw from the northern town of Jaffna which was captured by the rebels earlier this month after nearly 50 days of fighting.

Some 500 soldiers and nearly 2,000 rebels died in the battle.

LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran said in a message to coincide with his birthday last month that the army should pull out from all areas wrested from his control and doors to peace will remain "firmly shut" until then.

The military says it will not budge from Jaffna, the capital of a de facto state the LTTE had run in the northern peninsula for nearly five years before the army stormed in with its biggest ground offensive launched on Oct. 17.

President Kumaratunga said areas still under rebel control in the island's north would be taken either militarily or politically.

"A military effort means more destruction, death and injury to people, immense social and economic damage," Ms. Kumaratunga said. "We have always said that we want to avoid this destructive war."

Thousands of Tamil civilians who fled the fighting in Jaffna are sheltering in areas still dominated by the Tigers and the LTTE has said those who return to army-controlled areas will be treated as "traitors".

The latest round of fighting began when the LTTE pulled out of a 100-day truce ending nearly six months of talks with Ms. Kumaratunga's government, which came to power in August 1994.

Since then, the LTTE has used its deadly force of suicide bombers to cause considerable damage to the security forces and civilian targets in a bid to destabilise the government.



Boris Yeltsin gives his New Year speech at his Kremlin office (AFP photo)

Yeltsin urges Russians to back democracy, reforms

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, fighting for a political future, urged Russians Saturday to back democracy and economic reforms and said 1996 should not bring a return to the past.

Speaking at a Kremlin New Year's reception two weeks after his Communist opponents made big gains in a parliamentary election and six months before a presidential poll, he acknowledged that the year ending had been complex and tense.

A summary of his speech was released by the presidential press service and shown in part on television. "It is in Russia's national interests to develop democracy, to strengthen law and order and to continue economic reforms," Mr. Yeltsin said.

"This is the path determined by global development. If we try to abandon it, we will find ourselves in a dead end again," he said in a clear reference to seven decades of Communist rule. "The year 1996 should not become a year of new shocks and reverse movement."

Mr. Yeltsin, 64, made the speech a day after returning to his Kremlin office following a bout of ischaemia, a blood supply problem on Oct. 26.

The Russian leader has not yet decided whether to seek reelection next year. "I am still thinking about it," he said on Friday, adding that he would announce his intentions at the beginning of February.

Under the Russian constitution, real power lies in the presidency and Mr. Yeltsin's rivals are already gearing up for an election set for June 16.

Some of them, including ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, were present at the Kremlin banquet.

In remarks which could signal a new twist in Kremlin intrigue, Mr. Yeltsin stressed "deep and profound understanding"

between himself and the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov.

Friday Mr. Luzhkov made a bitter attack on the Our Home Is Russia political movement led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin despite having apparently backed it in the run-up to the Dec. 17 elections for the state Duma, the lower house of parliament.

Mr. Luzhkov said that the 10 per cent of the overall vote which Mr. Chernomyrdin's grouping received — far behind the 22.3 per cent for the Communists — had been a "defeat".

He accused the "party of power" of pursuing chaotic reforms and of having no clear cut policies, Interfax news agency said.

Mr. Luzhkov, who has a strong power base in the capital, apparently lost the ear of Mr. Yeltsin earlier this year. The Russian media attributed this situation to his differences with the influential head of the president's personal guard, General Alexander Kozhakov.

Gen. Kozhakov, in turn, sniped at Mr. Chernomyrdin and Defence Minister Pavel Grachev Saturday.

He told ITAR-TASS news agency he was deeply worried about the situation in rebel Chechnya, where Russian troops have been fighting local separatists for more than a year and where peace talks have stalled after a ragged June ceasefire.

"I am surprised how those who have misled the country's leadership by showing their 'blitzkriegs' on military maps and those who 'pacified' the bandits in a populist way can sleep calmly," Gen. Kozhakov said.

Mr. Grachev had promised to quell the rebels in hours and Mr. Chernomyrdin spearheaded peace talks.

Market fire injures 4, destroys 150 shops

SEOUL (AFP) — A fire raged through a shopping mall massed with hundreds of small stores and restaurants in a southern satellite city of Seoul Sunday, injuring four people, police and witnesses said.

The blaze broke out in a footwear store in Chungnam market in Kwangmyung city at 8:30 a.m. (2330 GMT) and raged for four hours, leaving some 150 shops gutted, police said.

Some 1,000 police, shop owners and government officials rushed through a cloud of black smoke as the fire quickly spread through an adjacent commercial area after destroying the two-storey shopping mall, witnesses said.

A helicopter hovered over the area, watched by thousands of frightened citizens.

Some shop owners risked their lives to recover goods, running through a cordon by army soldiers and police, an AFP photographer said.

Many of the shops had been closed for week-long New Year holidays from

Sunday, forcing firefighters to break through the shutters and cement walls, they said.

In and around the 150-meter-long shopping centre, some 600 shops were huddled together roof to roof, with tonnes of goods stacked on makeshift outdoor shelves, they said.

A 59-year-old woman and three others who had stayed overnight in their shops were hospitalised for serious burns, police said.

But no more casualties were reported.

Police blamed a short circuit, saying a lack of fire facilities in the 20-year-old market building caused big property losses, estimated at \$1.4 million.

"The fire had been expected," Lee Sam-Haeng, a 55-year-old shop owner, said, denouncing the government for failing to take preventive measures despite repeated warnings of a possible fire.

Tight security as Grozny recalls New Year blitz

MOSCOW (R) — Security forces tightened their grip on Grozny and forecast a tense New Year's eve Sunday, the first anniversary of the bloody storming of the Chechen capital by Russian tanks.

"The situation in Chechnya looks like being difficult," a spokesman for the Russian Armed Forces in the breakaway region told Interfax news agency.

In the previous 24 hours, three servicemen were wounded in a total of 21 shooting incidents in Chechnya, 17 of them in Grozny itself, Russian news agencies quoted military sources as saying.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted the interior minister of the Moscow-backed administration, Khamid

Inalov, as saying that the security forces were operating in "emergency mode" over the new year holiday — traditionally Russia's biggest annual festival.

TASS reported long tailbacks on roads into Grozny as the military clamped down on entry to the city of 350,000, banning all traffic between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. And otherwise allowing in only those with special permits until Tuesday.

Friday, a bomb apparently aimed at a police chief had killed one person and injured about a dozen in the capital.

On Dec. 31, 1994, three weeks after the army began an offensive against Dzhokhar Dudayev's separatist provincial government and its guerrilla sup-

porters, tank columns moved into Grozny supported by an air and artillery bombardment.

But fanatical Chechen resistance and the apparent failure of Russian generals to support their armour with sufficient infantry in the capital's narrow streets left the battered city littered with burnt out Russian tanks.

It took weeks and thousands more lives for the Moscow authorities to take full control of Grozny.

One year on, and with a much-broken June ceasefire the only apparent progress towards peace, Mr. Dudayev is still at large in the hills of the Caucasian republic.

Daily skirmishing continues to take its toll on both

sides.

Interfax said Sunday a guardpost by a railway bridge in Gudermes, Chechnya's second biggest town, had been fired on by rebels using a grenade launcher as troops continued to flush out guerrillas after retaking control of the area a week ago.

Rebels had held Gudermes for 10 days in an apparent bid to disrupt local and Russian national elections pushed through by Moscow in the face of threats from Mr. Dudayev. Hundreds are thought to have died in the fighting for Gudermes, the bloodiest episode since the ceasefire was agreed in June.

Aung San Suu Kyi calls for New Year's democracy effort

RANGOON (AFP) — Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's leading pro-democracy activist, has called for a collective New Year's resolution to make efforts towards successfully achieving democracy and human rights in the country.

"Let us make a New Year resolution to work as much as we can to successfully bring democracy and human rights to the country," she urged hundreds of people who gathered outside the gates of her home Saturday.

Aung San Suu Kyi's weekend public appearances since her release from six years of house arrest on July 10 have become a regular feature here and analysts here say they have become an irritant to the military junta.

The junta appears to have stepped up a media campaign singling her out for official criticism and accusing her of being a foreign "lackey" bent on disrupting law and order, they said.

The latest official commentary appeared in the English-language New Light of Myanmar Sunday, accusing her of being a "dictator," imposing her will on the people as well as members of her National League for Democracy (NLD).

State-organised mass rallies calling for the successful conclusion of the constitutional national convention, which reconvened last month, receive daily front-page coverage in the official press.

The convention was boycotted by the NLD on the grounds that it was unacceptable to the people in its present form.

The mass rallies are officially organised to condemn the NLD move and denounce its leaders as subversive.

In an apparent appeal to the military, which has steadfastly refused to engage in dialogue with the opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi over the weekend called for "more mature thoughts and actions" in the New Year.

"As we usher in the New Year we need to acquire new thoughts because, if we continue to stick to old ways and concepts, we ourselves will become stale," Aung San Suu Kyi said.

She also said she would continue to point out what she saw as glaring defects in the Burmese political system under the military.

"Pointing out defects is not an attempt at destruction," she said. "It is based on goodwill and should be welcomed."

The military took power in 1988 after a crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators. The junta supervised national elections in 1990 that were easily won by the NLD, but refused to relinquish power.

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Taiwan leaders call for rapprochement talks with China

TAIPEI (AFP) — The Taiwan government Sunday called on China to resume rapprochement talks and moved to ease a ban on political contacts with the Communist mainland.

The two sides of the Taiwan Strait should stop their shouting," Prime Minister Lien Chan told a year-end press conference. "They should reopen talks to achieve an amiable atmosphere and improve their relations," he added.

1995 was marked by some bitter disagreements between the rivals. China was infuriated by the private U.S. visit by Taiwan's President Lee Teng-Hui in June. It has carried out several military exercises seen as an attempt to intimidate the nationalists.

But Mr. Lien's call came as an official Beijing newspaper said China also hoped for a breakthrough in establishing direct postal, telecommunications and transport links with Taiwan in 1996. The China Daily, however, blamed Taiwan for remaining obstacles.

Mr. Lien highlighted how Taiwan has adopted 54 different measures to promote ties across the Strait of Taiwan in recent years.

"The signing of flight agreements with Macau and Hong Kong, and the formation of a trans-shipment centre were among the various measures adopted by us to show our sincerity in promoting relations with the mainland,"

Taiwan has banned official contacts with the mainland since the nationalists fled after losing the Chinese civil war in 1949.

But under accords signed in November, airlines in which mainland China companies have a stake can now fly to Taipei. Air Macau,

which is 51-per cent owned by China, can now extend flights from Taipei to Macau into China after changing the flight number.

An offshore trans-shipment centre has been set up in the southern port of Kaohsiung for foreign and foreign-registered Taiwanese vessels to sail directly to the Chinese mainland.

Highlighting the "gestures," Mr. Lien said "in this historic moment, there is no reason (for China) to rule out negotiations."

Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui emphasised how he and President Jiang Zemin of China have made proposals in the past year to normalise relations.

"We believe that these two proposals will serve as a bridge for promoting future cross-strait relations and as a basis for seeking common ground and overcoming the existing differences," Mr. Lee says in a New Year's message to be released Monday.

"We are convinced that under the new circumstances, both sides must adopt a fresh perspective, take a pragmatic approach, and foster genuine harmony before a favourable climate can be created for the reunification of China," Mr. Lee said in his message, copies of which were distributed Sunday.

The transport and communication ministry decided to discuss direct cable or satellite telephone links following a previous order by Mr. Lien that preparations be made for direct trade, communications and transport links.

China also said it hoped for a breakthrough in communication links.

Hundreds march in support of jailed dissident

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hundreds of protesters marched through the streets of Hong Kong Sunday calling on China to release dissident Wei Jingsheng, jailed for 14 years earlier this month.

The protesters, put at 400 by police and double that by organisers, marched from Hong Kong's legislative council building to the offices of the Xinhua news agency, China's de facto embassy in the territory.

Mr. Wei, 45, China's best-known dissident lost his appeal Thursday against his 14-year term, despite protests and appeals for clemency from western governments and human rights groups.

"We know he's lost the appeal but we just want Beijing to know that it's not

over," one demonstrator said.

Mr. Wei, a 1995 Nobel Peace Prize nominee, was released from prison in September 1993 after serving all but six months of a 15 year sentence for counter-revolutionary activities. He was rearrested six months later and held incommunicado before being formally charged in November.

Beijing has strongly criticised calls for Mr. Wei's release which it considers meddling in China's internal affairs.

A mother explains a protest placard to her young daughter during a rally calling for the release of Wei Jingsheng (AFP photo)



Firefighters battle a New Year blaze in Seoul's Kwangmyung area (AFP)

Mexican president shuffles cabinet

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — President Ernesto Zedillo's mini-cabinet shuffle has swung power back towards his Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) old guard, and away from his predecessor's preference for party technocrats.

Mr. Zedillo's mini-shuffle late Friday named Carlos Alameda to head the presidency's press service. Mr. Alameda is considered a close ally of old-guard Interior Minister Emilio Chuayfett, but not of the president.

More importantly, Mr. Zedillo also tapped Arsenio Farrell to be the country's comptroller general.

Mr. Farrell, who has a reputation as a hardliner, is a former labour minister and in the last government held the title of coordinator of national security. Mr. Zedillo's predecessor Carlos Salinas had been pressed for a definition of that mysterious job but

never offered one.

The president also named Jesus Reyes Heróles as the new energy minister.

Mr. Reyes, the son of another leader of the party that has ruled Mexico since 1929, has a reputation as a liberal politician and will now take over the delicate task of privatising Mexico's petrochemical industry and running the state oil monopoly.

Analysts described the mini-shuffle as a nod by Mr. Zedillo to the PRI's reform-reluctant conservatives, who progressively have been pushed aside by reformist technocrats in the party such as Mr. Zedillo himself.

Mr. Zedillo also held a high-profile lunch at a downtown restaurant to signal to the old guard — sometimes called "dinosaurs" here — that it was time for the party to close ranks.

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Hope for New Year

ONCE AGAIN, the world celebrates new year's day with much hope for the future. Yet as we look around us, we still see that the end of the cold war has not brought about all the anticipated results. The barbarous war in rump Yugoslavia took place in the wake of the new era of hope. So did the bloody war in Chechnya, which also took a very heavy toll on human lives. The extent of the crimes against humanity in Rwanda where millions lost their lives in yet another ethnic-based armed conflict also took place in the shadows of international reconciliation. The cause of human rights and democracy did not seem to benefit much from international peace. Many nations are breaking up on ethnic, racial and religious grounds at a pace unfamiliar in the past. When even an advanced country such as Canada got closer than ever to breaking up on cultural basis, it can be said that the future for coexistence does not look any brighter. The plight of the poor nations in the South persists, sometimes with a vengeance. The gap between the developed and the developing nations of the world does not seem to narrow, assuming that it is not actually widening. Even in the richest of countries, national tensions, crime rates and diseases are still rampant without an early promise of containment, much less reversal. AIDS, cancer and other epidemics still afflict the rich more than the poor without an end in sight for their growing tide.

All these problems exist at a time when more and more outer space explorations are taking place to rediscover the universe and its origin and whether there is life somewhere other than on earth.

Yet every new year, mankind renews its hope for a better future and prosperity for all. In actual terms the rejoice of man on this occasion is merely the expression of happiness over the passage of a year and the promise of better tidings in the new one. True, in our part of the world we are now seeing the onset of regional peace and the termination of hostilities between Israel and its Arab neighbours. But would we be eventually blessed by satisfactory solutions to all dimensions of the conflict in the area? Will we begin to work on ending the other conflicts in the region?

We have to be optimistic that we can achieve progress, but in doing so we also have to maintain our sanity and vigilance lest we all become consumed by new trends and currents.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i daily Sunday said that despite the tense political relations between Jordan and Iraq, the economic ties were continuing normally. We have always sought to keep the political issues among Arab countries isolated from the economic considerations so as to protect the Arab people's interests but this effort had failed in almost all cases except for Jordanian-Iraqi ties, said Fahed Al Fanek. The writer said that Jordanian-Iraqi political relations are extremely strained nowadays but their economic ties are left intact mainly due to the fact that the two sides have no alternative but to retain their social and economic ties as strong as could be. Iraq cannot do without Jordan, which currently serves as its lungs and a window for the outside world, while Jordan cannot dispense with Iraq's oil products except through buying Saudi oil, which would cost Jordan many times the price of the Iraqi oil, according to the writer. He said that in addition, Jordan's exports to Iraq in 1996 could reach \$270 million or 20 per cent of the overall exports. Therefore he concluded the Iraqis and the Jordanians are bound to protect their current economic and social ties regardless of the strained political relations.

A WRITER in Al Dustour warned that unless the Israelis respond favourably to the demands for the release of the thousands of Palestinian detainees, the whole peace process could be in jeopardy. Nawaf Zaru said that Israel has to date disregarded the demands for the release of all the Palestinians from its jails, in accordance with the Oslo agreement, and has thus created a new problem for the Palestine National Authority, weakening its stand before the Palestinian masses. As the Palestinians celebrate the return of their towns and villages to Palestinian sovereignty and prepare for the elections, they have their eyes on the detainees, whose issue could have its serious consequences on the final stage of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, said the writer. In particular, the Israeli leaders are determined never to set free Palestinians whom they accuse of killing Israeli soldiers or taking part in violent resistance activities, said the writer, who stressed that it is an urgent matter for the Palestine Authority leaders to settle the detainees' issue, which stands as a stumbling block in the face of a lasting settlement.

The View from the 4th Circle

NGOs, GONGOs, the state and Arab political rebirth

THE ONGOING, gradual political transformation that promises a new, more equitable balance of power between the public and private sectors in the Arab World will take several generations to clarify itself, but already one aspect of this change is clear: In recent years one of the most important new developments in Arab political culture has been the quiet growth of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This phenomenon is very significant for two main reasons: It reveals how indigenous, culturally authentic, credible and sustainable political transformation is most likely to occur in our societies, and it provides an important, natural meeting ground where Arab and Western culture can interact in a mutually beneficial manner, without the constraints of arrogant Western cultural imperialism or sorrowful Arab cultural dependency.

The sheer growth in the number of NGOs is a sign of something important in this respect. Figures compiled recently for a Unicef-Arab Thought Forum symposium by Ms. Amani Qandeel, director of the follow-up committee of the Arab NGOs conference, show that an estimated 40,000 NGOs operated in the Arab World in 1994. She points out several significant aspects of Arab NGOs:

Their growth rate has been very brisk (in countries such as Jordan, Tunisia and Palestine they have more than doubled in the period 1982-1992);

Many NGOs have started to provide basic social services and humanitarian relief to the needy in situations where governments are unable to provide such services, especially in countries where the relative ratio of government spending on social services to total public spending has declined in recent years (Jordan, Egypt, Somalia, Yemen, Morocco, among others).

Many of the new NGOs have taken on an explicit advocacy role that seeks to influence public policy formulation, and some have moved into relatively new and non-traditional fields such as women's legal rights and political participation.

To Ms. Qandeel's points, I would add the following observations on the political significance of NGOs in the Arab World today:

Most of the new NGOs reflect grassroots initiatives and are not dependent on government financing or patronage, though they do need to obtain government licensing.

The Arab NGO movement is heavily led and organised by women, indicating a monumentally important gender shift in the exercise of political and community power at the local and national level.

The majority of new NGOs explicitly highlight the inability of existing state structures to meet the needs of the needy in society. By organising service delivery systems, NGOs force the state to share administrative, and therefore political, power in a more decentralised manner; this is already generating an important new capacity by NGOs at the local and even the national level to identify, plan, design, implement, fund and monitor human services delivery systems that are effectively beyond the reach of the government bureaucracy, thereby breeding a new breed of Arab citizen who is dynamic, efficient and not dependent on the support or control of the central government.

Some NGOs are working in explicitly political fields, such as women's rights, democratisation, political pluralism, and efforts to break government-approved monopolies (note, for example, the role of the consumer

protection society in Jordan today in its efforts to protect the consumer by fighting both the coffee importers and the Ministry of Supply); NGOs are increasingly dealing with the manner in which political and economic power are wielded and exercised in Arab society, whereas traditionally they were seen only as charitable societies that functioned according to the blessings of the state and its bureaucratised power elite.

Instruments of political transformation

All of these factors are revolutionary in the context of modern Arab history. They suggest to me that NGOs are emerging as the most significant instruments of political transformation in Arab culture. They are achieving those political attributes of credibility, authenticity, and cultural compatibility that have not yet been achieved by the so-called "modern" political institutions that dot the Arab World, including parliaments, political parties, research centres and the press. This is because most NGOs enjoy the following logistical attributes that are often missing in state-sponsored, private sector, or foreign-inspired Arab institutions: They are grassroots in orientation, inclusive in membership, relatively democratic and participatory in their internal organisation, quickly and functionally responsive to real human needs at community and family level, and transparent in their financial and administrative operations.

It is very interesting to note that in most Arab countries, the fastest growing and most dynamic NGOs are usually linked to the three most credible sources of authority in our societies: monarchy/patriarchy, Islam and tribalism (monarchy/patriarchy represents political authority, Islam represents cultural/religious authority, and tribalism represents social/community authority). It is particularly significant to notice how NGOs closely linked to national political figures (usually women) are finding themselves moving into rather revolutionary fields, particularly the empowerment of women in social, economic and political fields (including the all important issue of fertility control and management of demographic trends by means such as longer education for girls, later marriage ages, birth-spacing and other family planning methods, and provision of training and credit to allow women to work independently if they so desire).

Time will tell if these are serious signs of change or merely attempts by the traditional power structure to co-opt the process of grassroots change by maintaining government controls through what have been called GONGOS (government-organised non-governmental organisations). I am positively inclined on this issue, and feel that the NGOs and GONGOs working for women's participation, empowerment, and political activism are sincere in their endeavours. I believe, in fact, that we are witnessing the first signs of the sort of evolutionary change that England must have felt in the 13th century or the United States in the 18th century, when the centre of gravity of political power slowly started to shift away from the total control of the state and the crown, and towards a more sustainable balance between the state and the people at community level. It is very likely that NGOs, rather than political parties or parliament, will be seen historically to have been the instruments of genuine political participation and democratisation in the Arab World in the late 20th century.

The once and future peace — Rabin's legacy

By Lynda Brayer

THE POLITICAL assassination of Yitzhak Rabin has unmasked the permanent underlying tensions within Israeli society. He had hoped to reach a conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to stabilise, and finally to legitimise the state of Israel as an acceptable political entity and partner the Middle East, without irreparably tearing apart the fabric of its society.

It appears that Rabin failed to recognise the inner contradiction of Zionism. How could a segregationist Jewish settler ideology uphold democracy, having already expelled most of Palestine's indigenous population? Repeatedly he said that his goal was the preservation and perpetuation of Israel as a Jewish state. Minor territorial concessions to autonomous Palestinian rule within the framework of overall control had to be undertaken in order to elude non-Jews from the Jewish body politic.

The absorption of two and a half million non-Jewish residents of the occupied territories would definitely jeopardise Israel's "democracy," in which approximately 20 per cent of Israel's indigenous population, Muslim and Christian Palestinian Israelis, as well as more than 200,000 ex-Soviet non-Jews, continue to suffer through state and social discrimination. Were the demographic make-up of an expanded Jewish state to change from an 80-20 per cent Jewish majority to one of only 55-45, he knew that the Jewish nature of the new Israel would be imperilled by the demands of equality within a democracy.

In order to prevent this

eventuality, Rabin was using the "peace process." His "peace process" would "bantustanise" the West Bank and Gaza, creating tiny and separate islands populated only by Palestinians. They would be under the control of the Palestine National Authority (PNA) and would only include the towns and villages, with a minimum of agricultural land. Israel would retain direct control of most of the territory, all the water resources, the main highways and all the Israeli settlements. This scheme would put the Palestinians outside Israeli responsibility, while preserving Jewish control of most of historic Palestine.

The map reflecting Rabin's security arrangements on the ground overlaps considerably with the political and geographic demands of the right-wing parties. Likud et al, who demand the retention of "Greater Israel," i.e., all the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. Like all other Israeli leaders, Rabin had no intention of implementing U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, which oblige withdrawal from the territories occupied in June 1967.

This context exposes the tragic irony of Rabin's political murder by Yigal Amir, a religious Jewish student, who simply did not understand the brilliant strategy of General Rabin, the military hero. For years, Rabin had been walking a tightrope with the Right and the settlers, both as minister of defence and as prime minister. He did not take advantage of the Hebron massacre to rein in the civilian settler "vigilantes," who are identifiable neither by army insignia nor uniform.

"The building of settlements on illegally or fraudulently gained land in the West Bank continues apace, accompanied by forced removal of Palestinian communities, with the law courts 'finding no justification to interfere,' as succinctly expressed recently by a supreme court judge. The limiting of one ethnic group to certain areas will resemble even more the former Group Areas Act of the national government of South Africa"

Letting the settlers roam free

Rabin permitted the settlers to roam unhindered in the occupied territories because of the political advantages they offered to the implementation of his plan. The settlers were allowed, if not indeed actively encouraged, to harass, frighten, and even assault Palestinians in their daily life. These attacks, lethal at times, contributed to the subjugation of the native inhabitants. At the same time, Rabin knew that if the damage they wrought went too far, i.e. became internationally embarrassing, as in the case of Goldstein, then such settlers could be condemned as "insane," part of the "lunatic fringe," or "fanatic extremists" — all most definitely "beyond the norm of Jewish society."

Alas, the settlers did not understand the reasons behind Rabin's permissiveness. While the Right-wing parties vilified him as a Nazi, many religious leaders, relying on a literal reading of the biblical traditions on land, condemned him for his treachery in abandoning the land God gave exclusively to Jews. The settlers had adopted

the position of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane that a state which was both Jewish and democratic was simply a contradiction in terms, which, of course, is a perfectly logical assessment. For the religious zealots, whom the religious community calls "our best boys," any concession on the land was unacceptable. The accompanying verbal abuse of Rabin finally gave way to the "inconceivable" act of a Jew killing a Jew.

The killing of Rabin, however, does mark a change in Israeli society. It appears that neither Rabin nor the secret services of which he was the head, anticipated that a Jew would kill a Jew for political reasons. For a Jew to kill another Jew was to descend to the level of the "nations." Now, for the first time, the violent practices which the Israel had developed into a fine art against Palestinians had been directed against a Jew. Jews killing non-Jews is an integral part of Israeli policy. Israel has consistently carried out political assassinations of Palestinian leaders, the latest victim being Dr. Fathi Shaqaqi in Malta only one week prior to Rabin's death — ironically, an assassination, carried out by the Mossad on Rabin's orders.

The death of Rabin does not really pose any dangers to the "peace process": the Palestinians are negotiating with the Israelis with "nooses around their necks." They have no room to manoeuvre and are required to promote actively the establishment of a stringent and unrelenting Israeli-controlled apartheid regime masquerading as "peace."

As a lawyer who works in Jerusalem, I find it astonishing that the Western public has acquiesced in the Israeli newspeak, by which apartheid is presented as a "peace process." I am constantly confronted by demolition of "illegally" built homes on privately owned land; town planning whose purpose is to remove land from usage through the creation of several types of "open public space," leading to a shortfall of more than 21,000 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem; legally enforced expulsion of probably close to 60,000 Palestinians out of Jerusalem, as a result of these planning policies; the absence of municipal services on all levels despite their being paid for; and the ongoing destruction of Palestinian families split up and in exile.

The building of settlements on illegally gained land in the West Bank continues apace, accompanied by forced removal of Palestinian communities, with the law courts "finding no justification to interfere," as succinctly expressed recently by a Supreme Court judge. The limiting of one ethnic group to certain areas will resemble even more the former Group Areas Act of the National

government of South Africa. This confined the black "race" to either specific and restricted urban areas, or to the bantustans which consisted of approximately 13 per cent of the land mass of South Africa. Similarly, Palestinians will be permitted to live in an estimated 18 per cent of the West Bank, with the rest of the land being out of bounds, unless they carry a permit ("pass" in South Africa) from the Israeli authorities. A continuing military dictatorship is being promoted as the extension of democracy.

Having grown up in South Africa, I find the resemblance to apartheid both obvious and irrefutable. Rabin himself described the peace process as "separation," whose literal meaning is "separation," or apartheid in Afrikaans. The purposes of apartheid are identical with those of apartheid: the prevention from meaningful political and economic freedom. This would be achieved through the fragmentation of the coherence and cohesion of Palestine and Palestinian society; expropriation of Palestinian land and the paralysis of economic development. Palestinian workers would be co-opted to promote the Israeli economy which aspires to new markets in the Arab World.

Although Rabin's "peace process" would secure the ongoing apartheid of Zionism, in Yigal Amir's view it could not match the biblical command of totally cleansing the land. Hence the fatal bullet.

The writer, a human rights lawyer, is the director of the Society of St. Yves, a Legal Resource Centre for Human Rights in Jerusalem. The article is reprinted from Middle East International.

features
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no longer igno

campaign kicks

A war the West can no longer ignore

Brutality and lies mark Russia's campaign in Chechnya

By Harold Elletson

CHECHENYA HAS been conveniently airbrushed from the atlases of most Western foreign ministers. The brutal war Russia is fighting there has accounted for tens of thousands of military and civilian casualties in the year since it began, and is reaching a new peak of intensity. It has involved the widespread destruction of property and the razing of Grozny, a city the size of Oxford. Russian forces in the republic have resorted to methods that would make the most hardened Bosnian warrior wince. Yet the West still prefers to turn its back.

I recently visited Chechnya and stayed for four days in a village near Grozny. Every night the sound of shelling and machine-gun fire made it clear that the war was far from over. Despite the relatively small area under Russian control, there are more than 200,000 troops in the Chechen Republic at any one time. Contrary to the Russian government's official statements, these are not Interior Ministry troops but are drawn from virtually every unit of the armed forces. The majority of them are conscripts who are poorly motivated, badly trained and terrified. A deserter told me that the first time he knew he was going to Chechnya was when the plane landed in Dagestan. He had been told he was being sent to St. Petersburg. In addition to the regular armed forces, units of *naibn* — mercenaries — have been established by the security services. They consist of criminals prepared to serve as a means of earning time off their sentences. They are said to have been responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the war.

The Chechen rebels, by contrast, are disciplined and highly motivated. Russia maintains that it is peacefully negotiating a peace settlement with individual field commanders who operate independently of General Dzhokhar Dudayev, the Chechen leader. All the evidence I saw, however, suggested that the Chechen rebels had a well-organised command structure and fully accepted Dudayev's leadership.

The Chechens have an ancient contempt for the Russians, and a hatred of the Soviet system, engendered by their mass deportation under Stalin in 1944, which made them leap at the chance of independence when the USSR began to break apart. An old man showed me the weapons his sons used against the Russians: assault rifles, mortars, grenades, an anti-tank rocket and a grenade launcher. "We buy these from the Russians," he said. "They sell us their weapons and we use them to kill them."

Chechen resistance has been stiffened by the brutality of the Russian campaign. Ramzan, a 28-year-old man, was tortured for

40 days after being captured and taken to a "filtration camp." He showed me where his fingernails had been removed so that needles could be inserted into the nerve endings. "They put a metal crown around my skull," he said, "and tightened it everyday so that the bone in my head splintered in about 30 different places. The pressure began to force my eyeballs out of their sockets so that eventually I could see my left eye with my right." Such stories are commonplace. So too are the descriptions of Russia's sustained aerial bombardment of villages and other non-military targets in the mountainous countryside beyond Grozny. When Roshni-Chau was attacked in October, dozens of its inhabitants were killed.

It is the use of air power that has led the Chechens, in the recent past, to try to take their war over the border into the Russian Federation. When Shamil Basayev and his guerrillas attacked Budennovsk while President Yeltsin was attending the Halifax summit, the world's media were told that there had been a terrorist attack on a civilian hospital. In fact Basayev, who had lost all 27 of his living relatives in the conflict, had led an attack on the air base at Budennovsk. His men took some casualties and called at the hospital on their way back to Chechnya. The Russian government sent its forces to attack the hospital. In the process several patients were killed.

Now the Chechens vow to attack other targets in Russia. "We won't put a bomb on the Moscow metro or attack civilian targets," one rebel fighter, a former professor, told me. "But we will hit military installations, particularly those connected with continuing the war."

There are many theories about the cause of this brutal war, the most fashionable of which is that it is connected with Russia's legitimate desire to control pipeline routes from oil-rich Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Whatever the reason, the West can no longer afford to ignore it.

Economics alone suggests that the West may be forced to rethink its tacit support. Earlier in the year, a Russian economist estimated that the conflict had already cost the Russian government over £2.5 billion — almost as much as the IMF and Western governments have pumped into the Russian economy in the form of credits and soft loans.

Russia had better be careful. By the time its application to join the council of Europe is considered on January 25, Chechnya may finally be on the world's agenda. It will no longer be possible, even for the appeasers in the Foreign Office, to turn a blind eye.

The writer is Conservative MP for Blackpool North. The article is reprinted from the Independent

Election campaign kicks off

(Continued from page 1)

Israel radio said the four, all from Gaza City, had been authorised to run by Hamas' leadership-in-exile and its spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, who is serving a life sentence in an Israeli prison.

Mr. Arafat was accompanied to Qalqilya by his appointee as mufti of Jerusalem, Ekrima Sabri, who is a native of the town.

During his speech Mr. Arafat made what has become a traditional reference in newly-autonomous towns to the ultimate Palestinian goal of creating an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

"One day Ekrima Sabri, the son of Qalqilya, is going to lead us in prayer in Jerusalem," he said.

In Tulkarm, he added: "We today have liberated Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Bethlehem and Ramallah, tomorrow it will be Jerusalem, Insha Allah."

Concerning the elections,

Mr. Arafat urged voters to approach the polls with open minds.

"Don't vote for Yasser Arafat, but for the candidate you feel is the best qualified," he said, adding: "If you have any criticism of me, don't hesitate to say it."

Mr. Arafat has only one challenge for the post of president, 72-year-old feminist Samiha Khalil, who is opposed to the autonomy accords.

Three of the four Hamas leaders who will run for elections — Khaled Al Hindi, Ismail Hanan and Said Al Namroti — submitted their registration papers at the electoral commission offices in Gaza.

The three said they were running as "Islamic independents" and not on a formal list as Hamas candidates.

A fourth man, Nasser Al Muzini, also signed up to run as an independent, but denied earlier press reports that he was an active member of Hamas.



An elderly Bosnian woman struggles with a heavy load of firewood making her way back from the woods up on the hillside (AFP photo)

Among the ruins, Bosnia digs itself out of the long nightmare

By Mort Rosenblum

The Associated Press

GRADACAC, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Bosnia is bomb-pocked and shell-shocked, fields of wreckage and crumpled towns. But, among the ruins, kids hike to school with bunny-rabbit bookbags on their backs. Stores may not be pretty, but shelves are full. Potholes deepen on the roads, but dentists fill molars. There are hairdressers, disco queens, pizza delivery boys, cabbies and dunk-shot artists.

Music schools are reopening. Farmers harvest their cabbages and sort out seeds for spring planting. Trucks, demobilised, are hauling bricks and bedsprings. There is gas enough for joyrides.

The war killed perhaps 250,000 people and put millions more to flight with only the few things they could carry. Unaccounted thousands suffered scars to their psyches that will never go away.

Even before NATO troops are in place to enforce a fresh

peace, however, Bosnia is digging itself out of its nightmare.

Progress so far is relative. For most Bosnians, after 3½ years of fighting for their lives, it is a question of whether the glass is a quarter full or three-quarters empty. "Last night my daughter dreamed MTV was back, and when she put on the television, it was," said Mehmed Suljkanovic, an engineering professor in Tuzla. "She was so excited. Then the power went off."

Tuzla, south of Gradacac, bears its scars inside. The city escaped most of the fighting, but its 160,000 inhabitants — one-third of them refugees from elsewhere — still must rebuild their lives.

In places like Gradacac, where armies duked it out for months on end, the wreckage is impossible to miss: blackened, windowless hulks that used to be schools, hospitals, apartment buildings, factories.

The centuries-old hilltop fort and its ramparts took

10,000 hits.

On the former confrontation line, only the town swimming pool is recognisable for what it used to be. Guesswork identifies the gas station. Other buildings are down to bits of wall and foundations.

"During the war, people ran out to make repairs and restock their pantries whenever the guns paused," Deputy Mayor Fadil Muhic said. "No one is wasting any time now in getting back to work."

Muhic runs a state-owned plant that makes prestressed concrete, and he expects to be busy.

"We should make a TV commercial for our concrete," he said, chuckling. "Slabs of it protected the high school. Two Serb tanks fired 50 shells at them until our guys came and took out the tanks."

Now the city of 40,000 seems to be held together with wide tape marked, "UNHCR," provided along

with plastic sheets by the U.N. high commissioner for refugees. Humanitarian agencies give food and tools. Muhic estimated that if outside loans are available, Gradacac should be able to put itself together within two years.

"No one can help us like we can help ourselves," he said.

From the early signs, it seems clear that Bosnia-Herzegovina will never recapture its old unique flavour. All over, lovely red roofing tiles and carved woodwork have been replaced with anything at hand.

Ancient landmarks, like the 16th-century bridge at Mostar and graceful Turkish mosques, were obliterated by shelling.

"Still, for families like the Kisics in Dobrinja, a village south of here, it is enough to have a solid roof and a few warm rooms to survive the winter until Bosnia's natural abundance returns with the spring.

For the first time in nearly four years, Husein Kisic left for the front with a happy heart. No one would shoot at him. Soon he would go back to his welding job, maybe, with a chunk of money from the army.

Sabina, 9, goes to school and music lessons. Samir, 7, plays with toy planes. His nightmares gone, he dreams of being a pilot. Sadika, their mother, finally has real food to cook for them.

"I did what I had to do, and now I think it is over," Husein said, sipping coffee by a cheery stove. "I don't bear anyone ill will. Life has to go on."

Surprisingly, much remains of a basic infrastructure — roads, telephones, powerlines, public services, restaurants, businesses — on which to reconstruct the shattered country.

Years of horrifying images have left the outside world with a distorted picture. Much of Bosnia-Herzegovina is dramatically beautiful, with

rich fields and forests and sweeping mountain vistas.

Notes of colour and humour appears at every turn. Near Zenica, a man with yellow buffalo bill fringes sewn onto his camouflage pants joked outside the Caffe Lambada without an apparent care in the world.

At the same time, physical and psychic destruction was so vast that no one's life will be easy to put right again.

In Tuzla, at a makeshift market in the snow, Saban Smajic shivered behind his pathetic wares: rusty screws, broken locks and wire. He had to feed his family until his pension was approved.

Bahrija Kasumovic, a passer-by, snorted when he mentioned pensions. Hers amounted to the equivalent of \$4 a month, and she had no other income.

Her husband died of illness. Her son was killed at the front. The jewelry and fraying suit she wore were all that remained of a comfortable upper middle-class life before the war.

To coin a phrase

The Euro? What sort of word is that? John Simpson, chief editor of the Oxford Diction-

ary, on the need to resist language by committee



Coins on Nov. 16, 1604 he announced: "One piece of gold of the value of twenty shillings sterling, to be called the unite, stamped on the one side with our picture (etc.)." The unite might have lasted longer if he had not, by another Proclamation of the Alteration of the Prices of Gold in 1611, raised the value of the unite from one pound to 22 shillings. The coin soon attracted popular names, the Laurel and the Sceptre, after the distinguishing features of different issues. Needless to say, the unite survives only as a footnote in the history of coinage.

Names are powerful things. Originally newspaper names, for example, were redolent of the qualities the papers sought to inspire. Guardian sounds safe and conservative; the protector, of values, the

ward against the forces of night. Eventually the name becomes meaningless by repetition. Who associates the Leeds Mercury with the quick-silver god who rushed messages between the low gods and humans: the Messenger or the Courier of news? But the Euro has no such resonances. Its very blandness lends colour to the mark, or the dollar or the franc. Let's hope the politicians have the sense to retain the names of the national currency units and let nature itself determine the popular style.

On a happier note, we've been flooded this year by references to the Internet and the World Wide Web. You can't help admiring the way its vocabulary has caught hold of the popular imagination. There's something exciting about its possibilities, reflected in the

language: home page, web crawlers, links and anchors; Netscape, Lynx, Mosaic. It may be jargon but it's fun and it may even change the way we live.

I'm a "carer" some of the time, though it's not a term I'd use myself. My five-year-old daughter has "severe learning disabilities," she's "on the autistic continuum" without being autistic. Last night I spent an hour rigging up a "touchscreen" micro and TV at home to help her with her wordless struggle towards comprehension. The vocabulary of disability stutters forward every few years from one orthodoxy to the next. It starts in the professions and filters through to the providers to the clients or customers. It's "caring" to use the jargon: even Princess Diana and Myra Hindley find them-

selves locked into it.

But most of the time we just use the jargon to skirt round the issues: "caring" jargon has to be non-invasive — it mustn't upset. So we're back with the lowest common denominator again: better to offend on one than risk confronting the issues head-on.

I worry about what seeds we're sowing for the future: today's children are bombarded with caring information from the media, carefully interspersed with action-packed, zany, polystyrene cartoons. I have some sympathy with Trevor MacDonald and his panel of pundits who have to report to the government on ways of improving the standard of English used in our schools. But it's not language which is the *bête noire*; it's the society within which it evolves. Saying the

right thing won't make us do the right thing.

By their nature, significant trends in language are not generally apparent at the time they start. We only notice them in retrospect. The term Estuary English dates from 1984 but the gradual fusion of cockney and outer London pronunciations will have begun much earlier. And interesting recent article (I think by a foreign observer) remarked on how the use of the preposition about has changed this century. He's right: the next word I worked on for the OED was the verb to moan and our linguistic monitoring programme had till then missed the prevalent idiom to moan about (something). A check on the British National Corpus of 100 million words of British English showed instantly that about is now the most statistically significant collocote of moan. Previously the standard idiom used was to moan of, and the introduction of about ties in the weakened use of moan — "complain" — a modern colloquialism.

This sort of change takes a long time to work through the entire language. Another, which does attract attention, is the tendency to omit the hyphen in two-word compounds, leaving the component elements written as if an unbroken sequence of letters (damsel-fish, damselfish; school-fellow, schoolfellow). Bat-telins are drawn between the traditionalists, who want word-division to be editorialised to aid comprehensibility, and the descriptivists, who want rules to mirror usage. The battle will doubtless rumble on till the hyphen and the apostrophe fade entirely from our keypads.

The result is that change is here to stay. Watch out for semantic shifts in 1996 and turn your thumbs firmly down to Committee English.

The Guardian

New investment law opens door wide for foreign investors

By Khattab Salman
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The new investment law adopted recently by the government would regulate foreign investments in Jordan allowing for foreign ownership up to 100 per cent in projects in the Kingdom, according to Investment Promotion Corporation Director-General Taleb Rifai.

"The new by-law would open foreign investment for up to 100 per cent in most sectors with no need for prior permits or committee reviews," Dr. Rifai said.

"However," Dr. Rifai noted, "there are a few areas where foreign investments are not allowed to exceed 50 per cent of the ownership. These sectors include schools, universities, radio and television stations, contracting, transportation and retail."

Jordan is currently aiming at attracting foreign investment to the country with the introduction of investment promotion packages facilitat-

ing capital movement, and equal treatment of foreign investors as local ones.

Dr. Rifai added that investment in the areas mentioned, which are open for foreign 50 per cent ownership, would not need prior permits as well. "All other sectors of industry, tourism, agriculture or services will be open 100 per cent for foreign ownership," he explained.

"Another area which will enjoy a maximum of 50 per cent foreign ownership is the stocks at the Amman Financial Market," Dr. Rifai pointed out. "Any foreign investor can own up to 50 per cent of the shares of any existing company without prior permit, and companies that are established with higher foreign ownership will be exempted from the 50 per cent ceiling."

Foreign investors currently own 32 per cent of the capitalised stock at the AFM which totals \$4.4 billion. Most of these are Arab owners.

According to official figures, investments at the

AFM in 1995 reached \$595.7 million, while investments in new projects in Jordan this year totalled \$394.3 million through 118 projects.

Dr. Rifai said that the objectives of the new investment by-law in areas of 50 per cent foreign ownership are to maintain social, cultural and educational policies, and protect small existing local businesses.

"As for the implications of the by-law concerning non-Jordanian investments, we expect them to increase the inflow of foreign capital to the Kingdom and create healthy competition for the local investors to improve efficiency and productivity through opening the sectors for 100 per cent ownership and foreign management," Dr. Rifai explained.

He said that the minimum cash requirements for investment in the Amman stock exchange will result in attracting small and big investors to the Kingdom.

"The implications of the by-law concerning investment areas should have a

major role in directing investments to the less developed areas of the Kingdom which will result in creating job opportunities, developing the infrastructure of these areas, and providing services," Dr. Rifai said.

Government statistics put the unemployment rate in Jordan between 15-18 per cent. Dr. Rifai had said that the new projects that enjoyed exemptions provided by the investment promotion law this year provided over seven thousand job opportunities.

"Finally," he said, "the new by-law would reflect positively on the macroeconomic policies of the Kingdom by providing more job opportunities, increasing foreign currency reserves, increasing exports and effectively reducing government deficit, and achieving higher rates of growth."

Saddam tightens belt to save Iraqi dinar

BAGHDAD (AFP) — President Saddam Hussein launched an austerity campaign Sunday to curb the decline of the Iraqi currency, reeling under U.N. sanctions, the official news agency INA reported.

"To improve the economic situation and the exchange rate of the dinar, we need to reexamine certain projects which figure on the state budget," he told a cabinet meeting.

"The first practical measure will be to halt the decline of the Iraqi currency," the president said.

The dinar has plunged to 2,500 against the dollar on the black market, under the weight of U.N. sanctions in force since Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, compared to an official rate of one dinar buying \$3.2.

The sanctions deprive Iraq of its lifeline oil exports, which accounted for 90 per

cent of its foreign revenues.

President Saddam called on his ministers "to avoid drawing up new development projects and creating new services, apart from those which can pay for themselves" or are indispensable.

The president called for tax rises and for a cut in the amount of bank notes in circulation.

"The enemy, which has not been able to achieve its military objectives or to make Iraq bow in six years, is now counting on an economic collapse. If we have to make sacrifices, each of us must do it according to his capacity," he said.

The average monthly wage is 5,000 dinars (\$2), compared to soaring prices of 60 dinars for bread, between 600 and 1,200 dinars for a kilogramme of flour, and 5,000 dinars for a kilogramme of meat.

Most people survive thanks to government rations.

Egypt sees room for interest rate cuts in '96

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's success in battling inflation down to historic lows last month paves the way for interest rate cuts in 1996 without threatening the cherished stability of the Egyptian pound, a minister said Sunday.

Youssef Boutros-Ghali, minister of state for international cooperation, said lower interest rates fitted Egypt's aim to promote greater investment in the economy.

"The government target is to lower the cost of investment by whatever means that implies," Mr. Boutros-Ghali told Reuters.

Inflation fell in the year to the end of November to 4.9 per cent — a 32-year low — from 7.0 per cent at the end of October and 11.4 per cent in November 1994.

"We have found a new centre of gravity for inflation," Mr. Boutros-Ghali said. "This reinforces our projections that inflation will end the fiscal year (in June 1996) somewhere around six per cent."

Until now Egypt has kept interest rates high to bolster the fight against inflation and avoid risking a run on the pound, which has stabilised at around 3.40 pounds to the U.S. dollar since currency liberalisation in 1991.

Egyptian pound overnight interbank rates stand at just over 9.5 per cent. Treasury bills yield 10.5 per cent and the central bank discount rate is 13.5 per cent.

But Mr. Boutros-Ghali said a general world trend for lower interest rates gave Egypt greater room for manoeuvre.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You may not get the help you anticipated today from bigwigs, so be with friends who have fine ideas to give you for being successful.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be with outside allies at this time who can help you to solve problematical affairs. Avoid stubborn fellow associates who are jealous of your success.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Rely mostly on yourself in order to get good career activities completed today, since others are not very cooperative towards you.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Find some form of pleasure which is not too expensive and will make you happy. Do nothing to make your mate resentful.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Remember to improve conditions at home as you have planned and don't run off to any new interests on the spur of the moment.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Study any visits you want to make early since others are rather high-strung today and disagreements could arise which are detrimental.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You want and need a good time so plan for it and don't let some boring financial matter disturb from completing any important tasks.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get yourself calmed down and then others will be more willing to help you to advance in life. Get much accomplished.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Get that plan better developed before you bring it to the attention of a bigwig for inspiration. Be wise in your career activities at this time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) See what you can do to help your close friends at this time instead of expecting assistance from them on any new projects.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day today to be wise and say little when making deals with others, especially bigwigs. This is a good day for handling credit matters.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Study your ideas well today and test them out in private before you bring them out in public so that you do not create an embarrassing situation.

Birthstone of January: Garnet, Rose Quartz, Amethyst.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make sure you understand others' point of view in business dealings and be sure of yourself when signing any papers.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You must use care in the handling of practical and material affairs which are important today, or you could lose a bundle.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Plan carefully what should be done about some pressing obligations or they could prove even more expensive in the long run.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Don't rely on close friends to help you to gain some personal, aims today, but go after them yourself and get good results.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) This is a day today to be very careful in the business world and do nothing which could spoil your chances in life or your reputation.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't follow the advice of a newcomer who wants you to make some radical changes or you can regret it later in the future.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You have doubts at this time about some responsibility so study it well and be sure it is correct before you put in the effort to handle it.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You may find it difficult to get your points across to a stubborn fellow associate today, but it is worth the effort you will be putting in.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Do not make an issue of the fact that you feel you are not getting enough money for the career activities which you are currently involved in.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Don't toss away career activities you have completed to pursue something new, or you may lose benefits already accrued.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Don't take a family tie to task and consider your own limitations. This is a good day or evening today to invite guests into your home.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is a day today when you find it difficult to say the right words in communicating with others, so rest up for a while.

Birthstone of January: Garnet, Rose Quartz.

World Bank Atlas: Global per capita income grew by one per cent in 1994

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Per capita incomes on average grew about one per cent globally in 1994 after three years of continuous decline, according to a World Bank report published Saturday.

Among low-income economies, China and India have emerged as two of the world's leading industrial producers and exporters. "The World Bank Atlas 1996" said.

"Developing countries (excluding the former Soviet Union) once again grew on average at a much faster rate than the world as a whole," the bank said in a statement.

The average per capita income of the low- and middle-income economies, excluding the ex-Soviet republics, rose by 2.5 per cent, "with large gains prevalent in Asia, especially in China," according to the annual Atlas, a compilation of international economic statistics.

High-income economies grew by about two per cent, but the former Soviet Union countries' economies — which the bank classifies as a

distinct group not based on members' varying income levels — shrank by nearly 15 per cent.

Between 1985 and 1994, Thailand had the highest growth in gross national product (GNP) per capita at 8.2 per cent, followed by South Korea's growth rate at 7.8 per cent, the bank said.

China and Singapore were tied for third place at 6.9 per cent GNP growth; Botswana was fifth at 6.6 per cent; the Maldives sixth at 6.5 per cent; and Chile seventh at 6.2 per cent.

Among group of Seven countries, 1985-1994 growth for Britain was 1.4 per cent; France, 1.7 per cent; Italy, 1.8 per cent; Germany, 1.9 per cent; the United States, 1.3 per cent; and Canada, a modest 0.4 per cent. Japan however marked 3.2 per cent growth for the period.

In 1994, Luxembourg had the highest per capita income of \$39,850 followed by Switzerland, at \$37,180 and in third place, Japan, at

\$4,630. Denmark was fourth, at \$28,110, Norway fifth at \$26,480; the United States, sixth, at \$25,860 and Germany, seventh, at \$25,580.

At the lowest end of the world's per capita income was Mozambique, at \$80, followed by Ethiopia at \$130 and Malawi at \$140.

In addition to the economic statistics, the bank looked at the world's peoples and the environment. It noted that in the developing countries, the poor benefit from economic growth by gaining better access to education and health services.

Many countries achieving high economic growth rates also have high levels of literacy, the bank said. According to the Atlas, Botswana, China, Indonesia, South Korea and Singapore, all with growth rates of more than six per cent in the past decade, have at least 96 per cent of their primary age children enrolled in school.

Israel's economy grew nearly 7% in 1995

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's economy expanded by 6.9 per cent in 1995, the highest growth rate in 23 years, the government's Central Bureau of Statistics estimated Sunday.

While final figures will not be available until May, the bureau said growth in gross domestic product (GDP) was higher than 1994's rate of 6.5 per cent.

It estimated gross domestic product in 1995 totalled 260.8 billion shekels. GDP per capita increased 4.3 per cent in 1995 while business sector activity surged by more than eight per cent.

After falling three years in a row, business productivity in 1995 rose while unemployment fell to an estimated 6.3 per cent from 7.8 per cent in

1994. The acceleration in growth has been fuelled by investment. The business sector's investments excluding housing rose to \$26 billion in 1995.

Private consumption is still growing but at a slower rate, increasing only 4.4 per cent per capita in 1995 compared with 6.3 per cent in 1994.

The rate of savings in the private sector grew to 11 per cent of disposable income in 1995 from 10 per cent in 1994.

But Israel's economy faces some serious problems, especially on the trade front.

The statistics bureau estimated the deficit in trade of goods and services, excluding defence imports, jumped to \$10.2 billion from \$7.9 billion in 1994.

Exports and imports rose

at a slower pace while prices of imports increased faster than those of exports.

The current account deficit in Israel's balance of payments also worsened sharply.

While Israel is still waiting for \$1 billion in U.S. civilian aid delayed by the U.S. budget crisis, the bureau said that if the aid was included the current account deficit would total \$4.2 billion.

This is up sharply from \$2.5 billion in 1994. The treasury had estimated the deficit would total \$3.5 billion in 1995.

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

Emergency Room

"Ever laugh during dinner and get a pea up your nose? He's got a Cornish game hen!"

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argleton

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

YADDD
HADE
SHOOTE
CANNUE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: _____

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: AGING FORTY TURNIP ALBINO
Answer: Often harder than a diamond — PAYING FOR IT

THE Daily Crossword by Gregory E. Paul

ACROSS

1 Theda of the silents
5 Golf course hazards
10 Driving gear, with 16A
14 Lendl of tennis
15 Serf
16 See 10A
17 Line of people
19 Put on freight
20 Regard
21 Freudian concepts
23 "Camelot" composer
26 Poetic contraction
27 Make tardy
30 Superlative suffix
32 Growup
35 Goes astray
36 Charged particle
39 "The Purloined Letter" author
39 "Bali" —
40 Custer's command
41 Chaney of old films
42 French artist
43 First name in folk music
44 Cancun cash
45 Dr. Bunche
47 Classic car
48 Fix to fit
49 Historical periods
51 Noose
53 Testifies
55 Climbing vines
60 Fashion magazine
61 Marching pace
62 Line of junction
65 Sgt. Biko
65 Nobelist Wiesel
67 Door openers
68 Pluvius
69 Escritoire

DOWN

1 Alpine wind
2 Rara —

3 Carry on
4 Los —, CA
5 Topic
6 Ump's kin
7 Frazier's foe
8 Vote
9 Beer mug
10 Related
11 One of four
12 Ruin
13 Matures
18 Ponce de —
22 "Time for —" (TV show)
24 Silas Marner, e.g.
25 Big abodes
27 Hungarian composer
28 Macaw
29 Diamond rarity
31 Charlene of "Dallas"
33 Unchained
34 Chorister
36 Ungentlemanly one
37 — pro nobis

40 "Over There" songwriter
44 Like a kit
46 Introductions
48 Racer Luyendyk
50 Passover meal
52 Kind of cat
53 Lectern

54 Gen. Robert —
55 Short-billed rail
57 Shade of blue
58 Author Kingsley
59 Track down
62 One: pref.
63 Corn crib

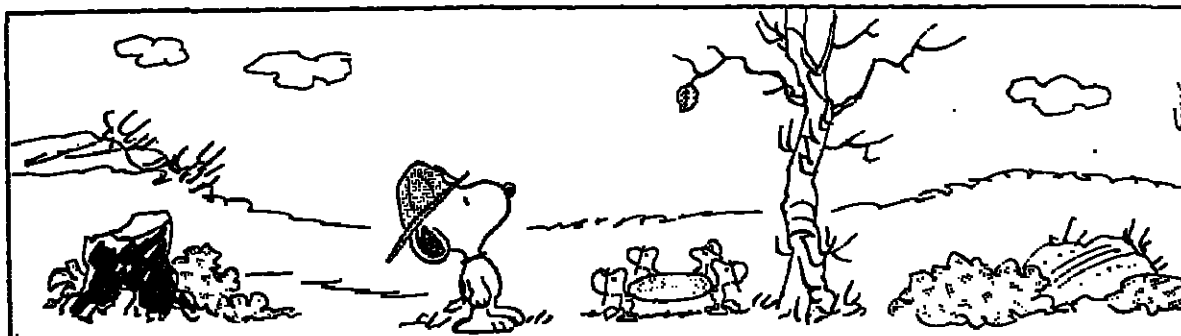
Yesterday's puzzle solved:

APES ORBED JAWA
DELL DELVE AXON
ODEA ONION CENT
BACKDROPKICK
ENTER ERASERS
STS ABANDON NOA
ANIMA FOAL
KICKBACKSDOWN
HIRT WIKER
ALA IDIOTIC USA
MONOLOG AARON
DOWNFALLBACK
FORD SOOTY ANKA
EVIL ERROR TIER
ZANY SEEME EATA

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Potash output, sales reach 1.75m tonnes

GHOR SAFI (Petra) — The Arab Potash Company (APC) Saturday announced that the company's plants at the Ghor Safi near the southern tip of the Dead Sea produced and marketed 1.75 million tonnes of potash in 1995.

The announcement was made by the company's board following a meeting which forecast 1.8 million tonnes of potash production in 1996, the plants' full capacity.

The board said that it also endorsed the company's capital expenditure which provides for an expansion project to be carried out in the coming year and approved of a JD 1 million aid to the local communities.

Dollar ends 1995 trading year up against yen, down against mark

NEW YORK (AP) — The dollar finished a tumultuous year Friday by rising against the Japanese yen but weakening vs. most other major currencies in a pre-holiday session of light volume and technically oriented trades.

On the final trading day of 1995, market participants focused mostly on wrapping up transactions and putting their portfolios in order before heading home early for the three-day new year's weekend. By mid-afternoon, most of the day's activity was complete.

"The only good action today overall is in the yen," said Roger Volz, director of technical analysis at Pegasus Econometric Group.

In late New York trading, the dollar was quoted at 103.40 Japanese yen, up from 102.67 yen late Thursday and up nearly 23 per cent from an all-time low of just under 80 yen reached April 19.

That left the dollar with a gain of about four per cent against the yen vs. a year ago, when it finished 1994 at an exchange rate of 99.58 yen.

The dollar's roller-coaster behaviour vs. the yen this year has been characterised by a relative period of stability for the last five weeks. Mr. Volz said much of the final advance Friday came from technical trading strategies involving other currencies. The dollar moved steadily higher vs. the yen throughout the session.

"There was not honesty a lot of volume in the market place today, so a lot of things were being exaggerated,"

said Hillel Waxman, chief foreign exchange dealer at Bank Leumi Trust Co.

He warned against reading too much into the dollar's progress Friday, except as it highlights the dollar's improvement against the yen since its all-time low this past spring.

Against other currencies, particularly the German mark, the dollar moved lower. Concerns about the possibility of a further reduction in U.S. interest rates weighed on the currency.

The dollar was changing hands in New York at 1.4366 German marks, down from 1.4380 marks late Thursday. That left the dollar seven per cent weaker than its exchange rate of 1.5495 marks at year-end 1994.

The British pound was quoted at \$1.5510, up from \$1.5460 Thursday and down less than one per cent from its \$1.5647 exchange rate at year-end 1994.

Treasury bond prices continued to move higher on Wall Street on Friday, pushing the 30-year bond's yield even further below the important six per cent level and garnering attention.

That move reflected the belief of some bond-market traders that economic weakness will prompt another rate cut by the Federal Reserve. Lower interest rates tend to hurt the dollar since they make dollar-denominated investments relatively less valuable.

Traders, however, warned against reading too much into the movement given the day's thin volume.

1995 a vintage year on Wall Street with 69 record highs shattered

NEW YORK (AFP) — Wall Street wound up a vintage year Friday as the Dow Jones industrial average smashed record highs 69 times and rose 33.5 per cent, its best performance in two decades.

The U.S. exchange, which represents 40 per cent of the world's stock capitalisation, eclipsed all other financial markets of the planet, from major economic powers to tiny emerging markets.

The Dow Jones average ended the final trading day of the year with a gain of 2,132 points (0.42 per cent) to 5,117.12, rising from 3,834.44 on Dec. 31, 1994.

The psychological barrier of 5,000 points, which appeared out of reach earlier this year, was broken Nov. 20. The Dow hit its last record of 5,216.47 on Dec. 13 before the long rally finally began to sputter.

The exceptional performance in U.S. stocks comes on the heels of a mere 2.4 per cent increase in the Dow in 1994 and a 13.7 per cent jump in 1993.

Analysts said several fac-

tors combined to push Wall Street to its finest year since 1975.

Strong corporate earnings were a major factor in the year-long rally, as were falling interest rates, low inflation, moderate economic growth and a record number of mergers and acquisitions that pushed stock prices higher.

Additionally, the market benefitted from large inflows of cash from the baby-boom generation — now at 50 investing for retirement.

Much of the money went into rapidly growing technology companies amid an explosion in the computer and cyberspace industries.

Internet-related stocks rose to dizzying heights, whetting investors' appetites and feeding the general euphoria on Wall Street.

But the technology sector was a roller-coaster ride for investors. Micro Technology, a leading chip producer, started the year at \$44, then surged to \$94 before ending the year at \$40.

Intel Corp. fell 20 per cent from its peak share price of the year and Microsoft shed nearly 20 per cent.

But analysts said the most important element in the stock rally was the decline in long-term interest rates. On the bond market, the yield on 30-year U.S. Treasury securities fell to 5.96 per cent Friday from 7.8 per cent at the start of the year.

The rally actually began last November, as soon as interest rates began to fall in response to the Republican victory in congressional elections amid a pledge by political leaders to eliminate the federal deficit in seven years.

The Dow rose 160 points in the final two months of 1994, and kept its momentum through 1995 as the Federal Reserve ended its moves to tighten credit in February and then eased key interest rates in July and December.

Earnings of leading corporations were helped by a falling dollar and major restructurings of some firms including AT and T and 3M Corp.

For 1996, many analysts are predicting a modest gain of about five per cent rise in blue-chip prices, helped by further declines in interest rates.

Market-watchers say exceptional years are often followed not by declines but by small increases. This was the case in 1925 and 1964, both years in which 59 records were set.

Additionally, presidential election years are generally positive for the stock market. Few experts are predicting that the Dow will hit 6,000 in 1996, with the average forecast around 5,400.

But economists point out that the market could stumble as a result of prolonged impasse over the federal budget between the White House and Congress or a slowdown in economic growth that could hurt corporate earnings.

A handful of analysts are predicting a correction in stocks for 1996, but most say the decline will be limited to around eight per cent.

London stocks exit with a bang, rest with whimper

LONDON (R) — The London stock market, which started 1995 on a cautious note, ended the year with the main index at an all-time high, but French and German shares went out with a whimper.

The 1995 performance, surpassed only by its 23 per cent gain in 1984 and a 35 per cent advance in 1989, was better than most strategists had expected this time last year.

The FTSE, which began the year at 3,065.5, ended at 3,689.3, a gain of 12.6 on the day. Its previous record closing level was 3,680.4 set on Dec. 1.

Overnight gains for the dollar were forfeited in the European morning in a short burst of commercial activity out of Germany. Dealers said an end-year lack of liquidity greatly magnified its impact.

Lack of news on the budget standoff between a Republican controlled U.S. Congress and President Bill Clinton has also contributed to apathy in the currency markets.

The stalemate between the two is now perceived to be nothing more than political, and dealers reckon that the chances of

an imminent solution are slim.

The government shutdown has delayed the release of some official economic data, vital in making investment decisions.

The European foreign exchange market is now effectively closed and will reopen for business next Tuesday. Japan will be shut for the first three days of next week.

French shares closed lower, ending 1995 with a small loss. The index for the 40 leading French shares fell 0.49 per cent in a year, the latter part of which was marked by damaging and widespread public sector strikes.

The French market was the worst performing of the major European share markets and its loss was the second consecutive annual fall. The combined loss for the two years stands at 17.46 per cent.

German shares ended the last trading session of the year with losses, but dealers were convinced they would climb again in 1996, supported by fundamentals.

The 30-share DAX index suddenly slipped in late floor trading as last minute adjustments were made before the closing bell.

But dealers said the DAX's closing level at 2,253.88, down 21.96 points, should not be overinterpreted as thin volumes may have exaggerated the moves.

Turnover in shares and bonds on German exchanges reached a record volume in 1995, rising by eight per cent to 8,092 billion marks (\$5,651 billion). German bourse holding company Deutsche Boerse A.G. said.

Turnover in bonds rose by more than 16 per cent to 6,360 billion marks (\$4,442 billion), while turnover in shares fell by 14 per cent to 1,732 billion marks (\$1,210 billion).

Further east, bourses in Warsaw and Budapest finished the year on a high, while most other East European markets took time off to regroup from a year that saw many lose as much as a third of their value.

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Banks allowed to lend more for purchasing stocks, shares

★ THE CENTRAL Bank has decided to increase the amount of credits that banks can lend to persons or companies for financing subscriptions in or purchases of shares, stocks or financial papers. The new regulations allow banks to lend up to JD 500,000 to any person or JD 1 million to any company or institution seeking financing to invest in stocks and shares. These limits are subject to the approval of the Central Bank but licensed banks can lend up to JD 150,000 and JD 300,000 respectively without having to obtain prior Central Bank approval. Under the old regulations, banks could only lend up to JD 150,000 to persons and JD 300,000 to companies with the prior approval of the Central Bank required for any amount above JD 50,000. The director general of the Amman Financial Market and the general managers of the Arab Banking Corporation (Jordan) and the Middle East Investment Bank praised the new measure and saw it as a positive step to encourage trading at the stock market. They pointed out that the regulations would provide liquidity and improve demand for shares on one hand and ease the negative effects of the strict monetary policies adopted to maintain the exchange rate stability of the dinar (Al Ra'i).

Cabinet authorises registration of six new insurance companies

★ THE CABINET has authorised the registration of six new insurance companies which have a total capital of JD 18 million. These six companies which have met all requirements are: (1) The Arab Insurance which has a JD 2 million capital, JD 1 million taken already by 85 founders with the remaining JD 1 million to be covered through private or public subscription. (2) The Jordan International Insurance which has a JD 4 million capital, 50 per cent of which spread among 12 founders and the remaining 50 per cent to be covered through private subscription. (3) The Amman Insurance which has a JD 2 million capital half of which covered by 38 founders and the remainder to be floated for subscription (4) Al Saqr Insurance, capitalised at JD 3 million of which JD 1.5 million were covered by 74 founders and the remainder to be floated for subscription. (5) The Arab German Insurance which was founded by 35 investors paying half of the JD 5 million capital and the remaining half to be floated for subscription. (6) The Islamic Insurance which has a JD 2 million capital half of which were taken by 116 founders and the remainder to be offered for public or private subscription (Al Aswaq).

Cabinet extends exemptions to newspapers

★ THE CABINET agreed to exempt paper imported for Al Ra'i, Al Dustour and Al Aswaq newspapers from customs fees for further six months under the same conditions and for the same amounts granted in previous exemptions (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

Abu Jamous to head commission for organising communications sector

★ A ROYAL Decree has approved appointing engineer Youssef Aref Abu Jamous as director-general of the commission entrusted with organising the communications sector (Al Dustour).

Higher postal charges take effect

★ HIGHER POSTAL charges will take effect Monday, sources at the Ministry of Communications have said. Postage of 150 fils will be required on all letters within Jordan, 200 fils to Arab countries, 320 fils to Europe and 400 fils to the United States. Those charges are the minimum required or for mail weighing less than 10 grammes. Higher charges will cover all postal parcels and other communication services as well (Al Dustour).

Deadline for magnetic cheques extended until end of June

★ THE CENTRAL Bank has decided to postpone the date for implementing the magnetic cheque system by the licensed banks until the end of June 1996. According to a senior official, the postponement was necessitated by the delay in delivering the required equipment until now. The magnetic cheque system was to begin Monday (Al Aswaq).

Marto goes back to work

★ IT HAS been learnt that the resignation of Michel Marto, deputy governor of the Central Bank, has been frozen and that Dr. Marto is resuming his duties now (Al Dustour).

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (December 26-December 29, 1995)

AMMAN — The U.S. unit appreciated against the yen and witnessed modest losses against sterling last week while stabilising against the mark. It ended the week 1.06 per cent higher against the yen and 0.55 per cent lower against sterling.

While New York closed on an official holiday Monday, the dollar depreciated sharply against sterling and modestly against the mark, while appreciating slightly against the yen. Reports indicated that the dollar's decline against sterling came after a large commercial buyer bought sterling against the dollar in thin trading following the Christmas holiday.

Reports also added that this buying order was intended to hedge against U.S. dollar risk stemming from the on-going debate between Congress and the U.S. administration over reducing the U.S. budget deficit. Some analysts said that lack of liquidity in the market and the absence of many traders also contributed to the dollar's substantial decline against sterling.

In the meantime, the dollar gained against the yen after the Bank of Japan announced that it would take new measures to monitor Japanese banks' operations, especially following the recent Daiwa Bank scandal.

The U.S. unit rose against the mark and the yen Wednesday, while stabilising against sterling. The dollar appreciated as market participants remained focused on sterling's substantial gains, the previous day. Sterling was reported to have appreciated against the dollar and the mark during trading hours, to reach a level of \$1.5620 and 2.2360 marks. Some analysts also linked the pound's rise to increased investor interest in the British bond market, which is expected to witness major changes to enhance liquidity. But profit-taking by a number of traders limited its rise, however.

The U.S. unit appreciated against the mark and sterling Thursday, while retreating against the yen. The dollar's rise came on speculation that a number of U.S. hedge funds were buying dollars against marks.

The dollar rebounded against the yen at the end of the week, while retreating against the mark and sterling. Reports indicated that the dollar surged to reach 103.42 yen during trading hours, as a number of Japanese hedge funds bought dollars against the yen. Selling orders of Japanese yen against the mark, in addition to the strong performance of the U.S. Treasury market were cited among the factors that contributed to the dollar's rise against the yen as well.

The U.S. unit, thus, ended the week at 1.4365 marks, 103.40 yen and at \$1.5515 to the pound.

Jordan Times
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JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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Arsenal's Dennis Bergkamp (left) is backed by teammate David Platt (centre) as he takes on the Wimbledon defence during their Premiership match at Highbury (AFP photo)

United trim gap to 4 points

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United cut the gap on Premiership leaders Newcastle United to just four points Saturday when they saw off Queens Park Rangers 2-1 at Old Trafford.

After a bright start by the visitors, Andy Cole broke the deadlock just before the break, heading home a left wing corner to snatch his third goal in three games in front of a crowd of 42,000. Earlier, both Bradley Allen and Trevor Sinclair went close for Rangers, but United then stepped up a gear and sealed the issue on 52 minutes. Dennis Irwin began the move, setting off on a run before squaring the ball to Ryan Giggs, who promptly fired home. After the break, Daniel Dichio charged down a Peter Schmeichel clearance to slot home into the empty net for his eighth of the season on 68 minutes, giving Rangers hope, but United held out.

Newcastle could only sit and watch as their closest rivals followed up Wednesday's win over them with three more points, the magpies' trip to West Ham having fallen victim to the big freeze.

Bad weather also forced the postponement of the matches between Aston Villa and Sheffield Wednesday at Villa Park and Southampton and Manchester City at the Dell.

Liverpool, fourth at start of play with a game in hand on the top three, twice came from behind to secure a 2-2 draw at Chelsea. John Spencer bagged a first-half brace for the blues, one a close range right foot volley on nine minutes after a cross from Dan Petrescu.

McManaman evaded things up ten minutes before the break with a half volley, but Spencer swiftly tucked away his second to send the home side in ahead at the interval.

With 15 minutes to go McManaman blasted home a right-foot shot to pinch a point in front of watching



United Kingdom Manchester United's Ryan Giggs (right) beats QPR's David Bardsley (left) on Saturday during their Premier League match at Old Trafford. Manchester won the match 2-1 (AFP photo)

manager Terry Venables. Arsenal, level on points with Liverpool before kickoff, failed to move ahead of them by crashing 3-1 at home to struggling Wimbledon.

Vinny Jones took his place in the Don's starting line-up, despite his Fa disrepute charge for a newspaper article hitting out at foreign players.

Arsenal captain Tony Adams was forced to pull out shortly before kickoff with a stomach upset.

After a nervous start by the home side, during which both Robbie Earle and Efan Ekoku, forced David Seaman into action, the gunners took the lead midway through the first half when Ian Wright slotted home his 15th goal of the season.

But the visitors, fifth bottom at the start of the day, showed no sign of buckling and grabbed a deserved equaliser when Earle nodded home following a Jones free kick seven minutes before half time.

Six minutes into the second half an Alan Kimble freekick found the head of Dean Holdsworth, who put his side in the driving seat. Not con-

tent with that, Earle then took advantage of a loose ball to Lob Seaman for the third. Blackburn Rovers revived dreams of a UEFA Cup place when they scored a 2-1 win over third-placed Tottenham Hotspur. The reigning champions turned in a full-blooded performance from the first whistle and took the lead on ten minutes.

A Stuart Ripley cross from the right picked out Nicky Marker, whose header slipped inside the post past Ian Walker. Then on 41 minutes, Alan Shearer swivelled to blast home and become the first player to score 100 goals in the Premiership.

The Geordie also maintained his record of scoring in every Premiership home game this season.

Spurs burst into life after the break and on 54 minutes Chris Armstrong crossed into the middle for Sheringham to dispatch a volley past Tim Flowers but it too little too late.

Nottingham Forest moved back into the top six at the expense of visitors Middlesbrough with a 1-0 win over the Teesiders courtesy of an

eight minute penalty from Stuart Pearce after a foul on England man Steve Stone by Curtis Fleming.

Bolton remain glued to the bottom of the table after going down 2-1 at Burnden Park against fellow strugglers Coventry.

John McGinlay gave the home side the lead on the quarter hour, but Noel Whelan bagged an equaliser just 30 seconds before half-time. The sky blues made sure with a John Salako spotkick seconds from time after Bolton keeper Keith Brannagan dragged Whelan Down.

Everton got off to a flying start against Leeds at Goodison Park when David Wetherall put through his own net after just five minutes.

The Merseysiders were reduced to ten men on 18 minutes when Dave Watson was shown the red card by referee Jeff Winter for fouls first on Gary speed, then Brian Deane but quickly regrouped and scored a second thanks to a spectacular solo effort from the toffees' flying Ukrainian Winger Kanchelskis on 51 minutes.

Death and mystery ahead of Cape to Rio race

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — Less than a week before the start of the 1996 Cape to Rio yacht race, the event has been jolted by the death of one sailor and the mysterious disappearance at sea of another.

Police on Saturday said the yacht Kuss Den Wind was found floating adrift 25 nautical miles off Cape Town with her sails down and anchor up.

There was no sign of owner and skipper Gerd Mayer, a 53-year-old German with South African permanent residence.

On December 21, meanwhile, British millionaire Tony Perry was found floating next to his yacht White Lace in the Royal Cape Yacht basin here.

Police are baffled by Mayer's disappearance; a spokesman said the sea had been "quite calm" and there was nothing to indicate Kuss Den Wind may have cap-

sized. Police spokesman Captain Bill Demier said there would be no search for Mayer.

"Each case is judged on its merits," he said. "The yacht was seaworthy and well equipped. It was prepared for the race. There was food and electricity but we could not get the motor started as the battery was flat."

Investigating officer Captain Kevin Jones told the Sunday Independent newspaper that Mayer's possessions were found in the stern of the boat.

It seems like he was repacking the yacht when he went missing," Jones said.

Mayer's partner, Margot Schreiber, who raised the alarm on Friday when he failed to keep an appointment, said Mayer's disappearance was a puzzle.

"I don't know what to think," she told the newspaper.

"This is not his style. All I know is that he would never have left his boat for anything. He would rather die or sink with it."

Perry's wife, meanwhile, said there had been a howling gale the night he died and she could only assume he went on board to check the moorings.

He might have been hit by the boom and knocked into the water, she added. Police have ruled out foul play in Perry's death.

In another development, it was reported Sunday that Allan Stokes, another contestant, has been given permission by police to leave the country to take part in the race, which starts here on January 6.

Stokes is under investigation after he allegedly caused the death of trainee diplomat Elvis Govender, at the Vaal Dam south of Johannesburg last month.

Stokes allegedly caught Govender and a colleague on his yacht after they boarded it during a party.

Govender's colleague, Jacqueline Coetzer, claims Stokes attacked them with a machete, causing them to jump overboard. Govender could not swim and clung to the hull of the boat but was forced off by Stokes, who chopped his hand with the machete, she told police.

Govender's body was later found floating in the dam, his hands and shoulders bearing slash wounds.

Stokes is due to appear in court in April but according to Afrikaans-language Rapport, he has been given permission to enter the race.

Race organisers said the developments in the lead-up to the Cape to Rio were a "setback" but that entrants were keen to get on with the race and there was an upbeat spirit among yachtsmen.

Cavaliers beat Trail Blazers in double OT

CLEVELAND (R) — Bobby Phills scored a career-high 43 points and Terrell Brandon added 24 as the Cleveland Cavaliers outlasted the Portland Trail Blazers with a 124-121 double-overtime victory Saturday.

"I can't say enough about the team," Cavs coach Mike Fratello said. "They have hearts so big it's tough to describe. The guys are going to Phills because they see he is in a groove and he's playing well."

"Phills was just so strong and we didn't push out on him," Blazers coach P.J. Carlesimo said. "He's a heck of a player."

"I'm feeling comfortable out there and now I'm taking shots I usually don't take and the guys are looking for me," Phills said.

Rod Strickland scored 22 points, Clifford Robinson 20 and Aaron McKie 18 for Portland, which lost for the eighth time in nine games and has dropped seven straight road games.

A tip-in by Portland's Arvydas Sabonis on an international miss of a Rod Strickland free throw forced the first overtime. Cleveland's Danny Ferry sank a three-pointer at the buzzer for double OT at 114-114. The Cavs outscored Portland 10-7 in the second extra session.

Cleveland was 15-for-40 from three-point range. The 40 three-point attempts set an NBA record.

Brandon made all seven of his foul shots to extend his consecutive streak to 60 over nine games.

In Dallas, Sam Cassell's desperation 25-foot bank shot at the buzzer capped a wild finish as the Houston Rockets edged the Mavericks 105-102.

George McCloud's three-pointer from the top of the key had tied the game with 2.2 seconds to play.

Hakeem Olajuwon scored 18 of his 35 points in the fourth quarter. Tony Dumas led Dallas with 27 points.

In Phoenix Hersey Hawkins scored six of his 35 points in overtime to lead the Seattle SuperSonics to their fifth straight victory, 123-112 over the Suns.

Gary Payton added 24 points and 10 assists.

Charles Barkley had 30 points and 14 rebounds in 50 minutes before being ejected in overtime. Elliott Perry added 25 points and 10 assists for Phoenix, whose three-game winning streak ended.

In Chicago, Luc Longley sank two free throws with 20 seconds left and the Bulls then survived three missed shots by Steve Smith for a 95-93 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Michael Jordan scored 33 points and Scottie Pippen added 23 for the Bulls, who blew a 12-point fourth-quarter lead but remained perfect at home (15-0).



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan (23) goes up for a shot over the Atlanta Hawks' Grant Long in the first quarter of their game in Chicago (Reuters photo)

Smith scored 20 points and Mookie Blaylock 19 for Atlanta.

At Detroit, Grant Hill scored 28 points, including a tie-breaking three-point play with 50 seconds left in overtime, as the Pistons beat the Charlotte Hornets 102-100.

Larry Johnson scored 38 points and Kendall Gill added 20 for Charlotte.

In Miami, Billy Owens scored a career-high 34 points and Bimbo Coles added seven in the last two minutes as the Heat held off the Los Angeles Clippers, 105-96.

Owens shot 15-of-18 from the field with 10 rebounds and four assists.

Brian Williams scored 21 points and Loy Vaught and Malik Sealy added 19 points apiece for Los Angeles.

In Milwaukee, Tim Legler

scored a season-high 19 points as the Washington Bullets held off the Bucks 96-87 for their third straight victory.

Juwan Howard and Robert Pack scored 15 points apiece for the Bullets, who played without star forward Chris Webber.

Glenn Robinson had 21 points and Vin Baker 20 for Milwaukee.

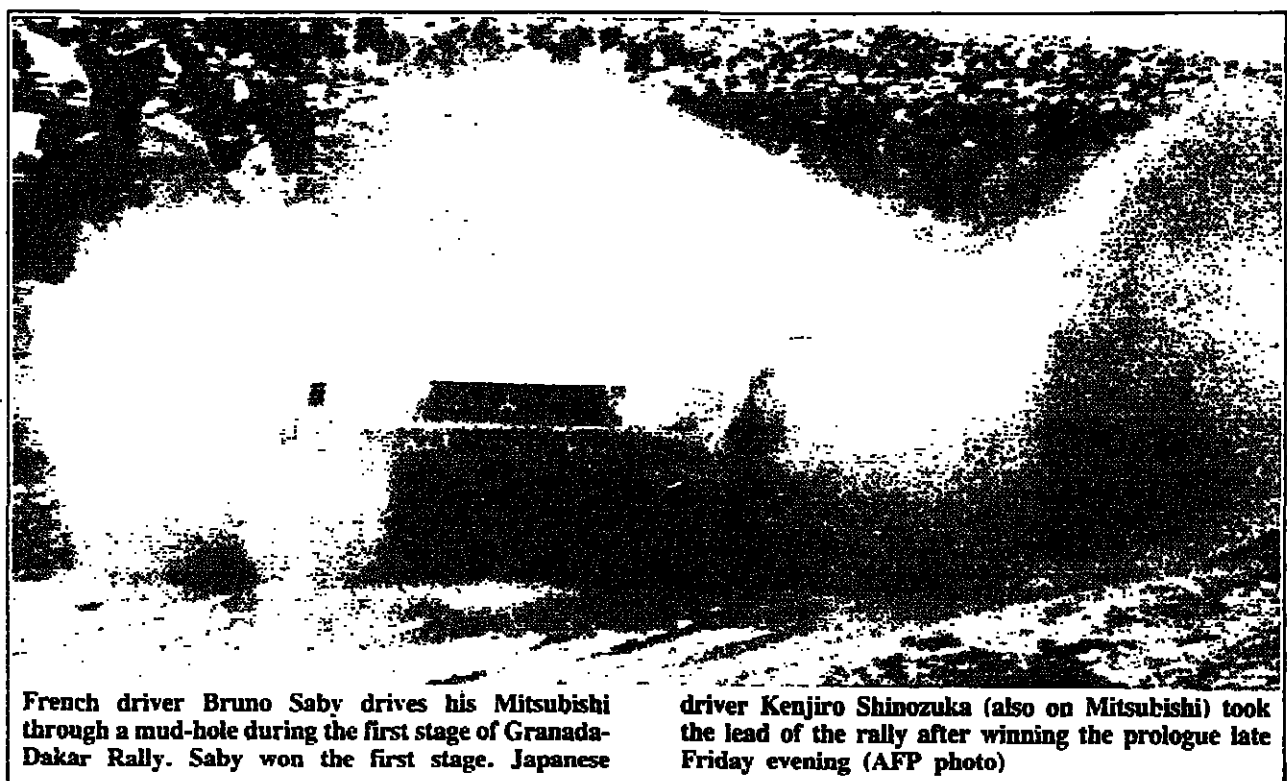
At New Jersey, Chris Mullin scored 25 points to lead five players in double figures as the Golden State Warriors beat the Nets 120-110.

Rony Seikaly added 23 points and Latrell Sprewell 22.

Armon Gilliam scored 29 points for New Jersey, which has dropped four straight at home since winning its first seven.

NBA RESULTS

Utah	99	Charlotte	100 (OT)
Cleveland	124	LA Clippers	96
Detroit	102	New Jersey	110
Miami	105	Atlanta	93
Golden State	120	Dallas	102
Chicago	95	Minnesota	84
Houston	105	Philadelphia	100
San Antonio	122	Milwaukee	87
Denver	108	Phoenix	112 (OT)
Washington	96	Boston	95
Seattle	123		
Vancouver	103		



French driver Bruno Saby drives his Mitsubishi through a mud-hole during the first stage of Granada-Dakar Rally. Saby won the first stage. Japanese

driver Kenjiro Shinozuka (also on Mitsubishi) took the lead of the rally after winning the prologue late Friday evening (AFP photo)

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NFL playoffs roundup

Philadelphia Eagles twist Lion tail 58-37

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) — The Philadelphia Eagles, with one stretch of 44 unanswered points, crushed the Detroit Lions 58-37 here Saturday in the highest scoring playoff game in National Football League history.

Rodney Peete threw two first-half touchdown passes and Barry Wilburn and William Thomas returned interceptions for scores for the Eagles, whose 38 first-half points tied a National Conference playoff record.

The Lions, who rode a seven-game winning streak into the playoffs, saw their miserable post-season luck continue. Detroit have now lost eight of their last nine playoff games, and they haven't won a post-season game on the road since 1957. Their misery started early as Philadelphia intercepted Scott Mitchell three times in the first half, with each turnover leading to a touchdown.

Mitchell, who threw for 4,338 yards this season, was 13 of 29 for 155 yards and four interceptions and was replaced in the third quarter by Don Majkowski, who was 14 of 23 for 206 yards, three touchdowns and two interceptions.

Peete completed 17 of 25 for 270 yards and three TDs. He got a lot of help from his defense, which got interceptions from Wilburn, Kurt Gouveia and Mark McMillian that gave Philadelphia excellent field position.

"From a defensive standpoint, we got a lot of turnovers," Eagles coach Ray Rhodes said. "We created pressure on the quarterback early in the game."

"They beat U.S. in every way possible," said Lions coach Wayne Fontes. "They deserve to win. We turned the ball over seven or eight times and you can't do that in a playoff game."

McMillian's 16-yard interception return set up Charlie Garner's 15-yard touchdown run on the very next play, giving the Eagles a 7-0 lead.

Mitchell tied it with a 32-yard scoring pass to David Sloan, but Garner's 30-yard run set up Gary Anderson's 21-yard field goal that gave the Eagles the lead for good 2:04 into the second quarter.

Less than two minutes later, Peete connected with Fred Barnett on a 22-yard TD pass. Then Wilburn snagged a wayward pass from Mitchell and ran it back for a touchdown.

Gouveia's interception gave the Eagles the ball at the Lions' 31-yard-line. Eight plays later, Ricky Watters scored on a one-yard drive.

On the final play of the half, Peete lofted a 43-yard bomb that Rob Carpenter wrestled away from a Detroit defender in the end zone. The halftime score matched Washington's 38 points against the Los Angeles Rams in a 1983 NFC divisional playoff game.



Philadelphia Eagles' Mark McMillian (29) breaks up a pass intended for Detroit Lions' Brett Perriman in the first quarter of their National Football League (Reuters photo)

After the half, Watters took a screen pass 45 yards for a score and Anderson kicked two field goals to extend his streak of successes to a league-record 16.

Both Garner and Watters outgained Lions star Barry Sanders, who was held to 40 yards on 10 carries.

It was an improvement on Sanders' miserable minus-one yard in the first round of the playoffs last year, but he never really figured in the

game. The Eagles took the score to 51-7 before Majkowski threw touchdown passes to Herman Moore and Johnnie Morton. But in the first minute of the fourth quarter, Thomas picked off Majkowski and took it back 30 yards of a score.

The 95 total points eclipsed the totals established by the San Diego Chargers and Miami Dolphins in 1981 and the Houston Oilers and Buffalo Bills in 1992. Both those games went to overtime and ended 41-38. Philadelphia's point total was the third-highest in league history.

Now the Eagles must await the outcome of the NFC wildcard game between the Atlanta Falcons and the Green Bay Packers to learn their second-round opponents.

If Atlanta win, the Eagles visit San Francisco. If the Packers win, the Eagles go to Dallas.

Lions offensive tackle Lomas Brown, who earlier this week guaranteed a big Detroit win, meekly swallowed his words: "We could have played a high school team today and not beaten them," he said. "They were the better team and they just came out and beat us."

McMillian said: "He said it was going to be over in the first quarter and it was. But he chose the wrong team."

Bills advance in playoffs

BUFFALO (AFP) — The Buffalo Bills, led by Thurman Thomas' 158 rushing yards, stampeded the Miami Dolphins 37-22 in the first round of the National Football League playoffs here Sunday.

Buffalo rushed for an American Conference playoff record 341 yards, bettering the San Diego Chargers' mark of 318, set in 1963 against the Boston Patriots.

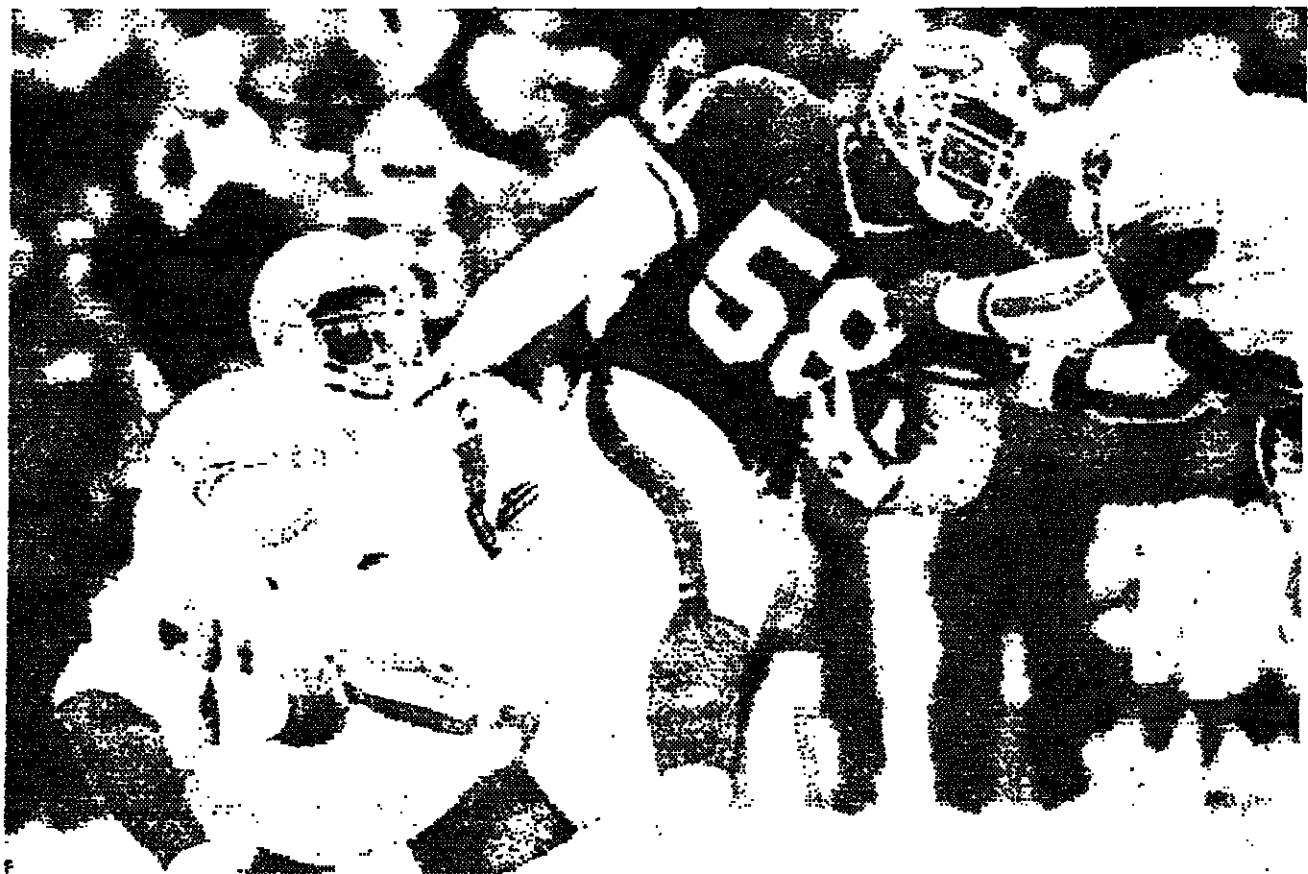
The NFL record is 382 yards, set by the 1940 Chicago Bears in a 73-0 win over the Washington Redskins.

The Dolphins failed to get on the scoreboard until the fourth quarter, when it was too late to prevent an anticlimactic end to their under-achieving season.

"It was obvious early we couldn't stop the run," said Miami coach Don Shula.

"Thurman Thomas had another great day. We thought we could do better against the run. It's a tough way to remember the season."

Miami were picked by many as the AFC favorites at the start of the season. Instead they backed into the playoff while the Bills — who failed to make the playoffs



Miami Dolphins' Bernie Parmalee (left) and Keith Byars try to tackle Buffalo Bills linebacker Mario Perry (58) who intercepted a pass by Dolphins' quarterback Dan Marino in the second period of the AFC wildcard game (Reuters photo)

"They played the game of their life," Kelly said of his line. "I wasn't sacked and all the running backs were able to put up those numbers."

Buffalo stretched their lead to 27-0 when Steve Christie field goal in the third quarter.

Miami's first score came early in the fourth when Dan Marino completed a five-yard pass to OJ McDuffie for a touchdown. Buffalo responded almost immediately

With eight minutes left, Marino hit Randal Hill with a 45-yard touchdown pass. Buffalo had another field goal from Christie before Miami's Terry Kirby scored on a one-yard run and the Dolphins added a two-point conversion to make it 37-22.

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JSF to study allowing foreign players in Jordanian League

Ramtha stretch lead as Hussein, Faisali fumble

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — While the competition became more intense with the conclusion of the Premier League's 15th week, the technical and administrative aspects of the sport were also seriously discussed by the Jordan Soccer Federation's (JSF) final regular meeting of the year.

Based on a proposal by titleholders Al Wihdat club, the JSF discussed the issue of allowing foreign players in the Jordanian League.

While the idea received a preliminary OK by the board it was decided that the JSF's executive committee would talk it over with the respective clubs and study the proposal's impact on the sport in the Kingdom. A final decision would later be made by the JSF.

Meanwhile as the final week of 1995 was rounded up Al Ramtha expanded their lead to 33 points, four points ahead of second placed Al Faisali and titleholders Al Wihdat with 29 points.

Al Ramtha had scored an expected 4-1 win over Al Jalil, while Al Wihdat moved up to third with a 3-1

win over Al Russeifa. Al Faisali stumbled and could not improve their overall points after a final minute 2-2 draw with Kufrum.

Al Qadissieh were the biggest movers, two places up to fourth after their 2-0 win over Sahab, while Al Ahli scored an important and surprising win defeating Al Hussein 4-1.

Al Ahli thus moved out of the last four to 8th place while Al Hussein, who led the standings throughout most of the first leg, dropped two places to fifth.

Al Jazireh's standing remained unchanged despite their 2-0 win over Al Baqaa who dropped to 9th.

Meanwhile the JSF imposed a series of fines on Al

Jazireh. Player Ibrahim Ahmad was suspended for six matches and his club was fined JD 100 for unsportsmanlike conduct during their match against Al Wihdat.

One of the team's officials, Maher Awwad was suspended for a year and Al Jazireh were fined another JD 100 for Awwad's verbal abuse of the referees and fans.

The team's coach Sabah Abdul Jalil was issued a warning for his unruly actions after Al Jazireh's match with Al Wihdat.

Al Baqaa club were also fined JD 100 after their fans verbally abused the referees in their match against Al Jalil.

STANDINGS AFTER 15TH WEEK

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Ramtha	15	10	3	2	23	6	33
Faisali	15	8	5	2	25	11	29
Wihdat	15	8	5	2	25	14	29
Qadissieh	15	8	3	4	31	15	27
Hussein	15	7	5	3	31	14	26
Kufrum	15	6	7	2	21	13	25
Jazireh	15	6	4	5	27	22	22
Ahli	15	4	7	4	21	14	19
Baqaa	15	5	3	7	22	23	18
Sahab	15	1	8	6	10	22	11
Jalil	15	1	2	12	14	38	5
Russeifa	15	-	-	15	11	59	-

Murder fear over Olympic medallist

MOSCOW (Agencies) — For the second time in a month, a Russian Olympic medal winner has died.

Police have not ruled out murder in investigations into the death of 1992 Olympic women's highboard diving silver medallist Elena Miroshina, it was reported on Saturday.

Miroshina, who was four months pregnant, was found

dead at the foot of her apartment building on Monday although the death was only reported on Saturday.

Police said the 21-year-old may have fallen from her ninth floor flat or have been pushed by burglars.

Miroshina also won a silver medal at the 1991 World Championships and was European champion in 1987 and 1991. She retired from competition in 1993.

Miroshina's death occurred less than a month after two-time figure skating gold medallist Sergei Grinkov died of a heart attack.

The death of the diver was not reported in Russian news media, and the reason for this was not immediately clear. No other details were available from police, who said an investigation was under way.

Rosset, Hingis win in Hopman Cup

PERTH (AFP) — Switzerland beat Australia 2-1 as the Hopman Cup tennis mixed teams' event got underway here on Sunday.

Fifteen-year-old wonder player Martina Hingis and big-serving Marc Rosset both won their singles clashes to give Switzerland an unassailable lead.

Australia saved some face in the mixed doubles, winning 7-5, 6-1 as Switzerland took the opening round tie in the 700,000 Australian dollar (\$510,000) tournament.

In the women's singles, Hingis, ranked 16th in the world, overcame 37th-ranked Nicole Bradtke, 6-7 (7-9), 6-3, 6-3.

Hingis quickly recovered from a shaky opening set to take the next two comfortably, wrapping up the clash in just over two hours.

Then Rosset, the Barcelona Olympic champion, outclassed Mark Philippoussis in straight sets, 6-3, 6-3, in exactly an hour.

Frenchman faces 1st big test at Spurs

MANCHESTER (R) — William Frunier found himself an instant place in Manchester United hearts on Saturday but Manager Alex Ferguson knows the French international's first real test will come at Tottenham on Monday night.

Frunier gave an assured Premier League debut as United beat struggling QPR 2-1 — solid at the back, composed on the ball and a threat up front — with Andy Cole grabbing his third goal in three games after Juergen Sommer could only parry a powerful header by the Frenchman.

Yet while Ferguson was pleased with Frunier's contribution, he concedes that the 28-year-old defender will need to step his game up another gear if United are to give themselves every chance of closing the gap on Newcastle.

to just one point. "William showed what we know he can do against Rangers," Ferguson said. "He's an excellent passer of the ball and he's certainly tough enough."

"But tomorrow at Spurs will be altogether different from him. He'll be playing away from home and in a more defensive situation, when it will be unfamiliar for him."

Ferguson added: "He's used to playing in Europe but over here every team gets more people in the box than they do on the continent."

"Over there they have a lot more patience and, when they do attack you, they maybe have one or two strikers forward. But in our game you regularly see teams having four or five bodies in the other team's area."

BRITISH LADIES OF AMMAN

Monthly Meetings

Wednesday 3 January 10/12 p.m.

Wednesday 10 January 4/6 p.m.

at the Forte Grand Hotel

and thereafter every first Wednesday of the month from 10/12 p.m. and every second Wednesday of the month from 4/6 p.m.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMMAM HIRSH

HEED THE WARNING

Neither vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH

♠ Q 10

♥ K 4

♦ A J 10 7 6 5

♣ A K 2

WEST

♠ A 8 5 3

♥ 8 7 5

♦ 9 8 2

♣ J 10 4 3

EAST

♠ K J 4 2

♥ Q J 10 7 3

♦ K 4

♣ 9 6

SOUTH

♠ 9 7 6

♥ A 9 8 5

♦ Q 3

♣ Q 8 7 5

The bidding:

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

10 10 INT Pass Pass

3NT Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Eight of ♣

America's most prolific bridge writer, Eddie Kantar, has done it again. After producing some 1,000 tips on declarer play, his new book takes away that advantage by offering the defense 576 ways to thwart the offense. "Defensive Tips," by Edwin B. Kantar. 278 pp., paperback, \$12.95 postpaid from the

author, P.O. Box 427, Venice, Calif. 90294. Mention this column and have it autographed free. As is usual with a Kantar effort, the book contains sound theory presented in a light, easy-to-read style. This hand is from the section on counting declarer's tricks. To see it as presented, cover the South and West hands.

You make a normal one-heart overcall of North's one-diamond opening and South enters the fray with one no trump. North's raise to game closes the auction.

Partner obediently leads a heart, and declarer captures your ten with the ace to run the queen of diamonds to your king. Now what?

"You can see that the declarer has nine tricks: five diamonds, two hearts and at least two clubs. Switch to a low spade; it is your only chance."

The tip is simple and logical: "When declarer is known to have enough tricks in three suits to make the contract, shift to the fourth suit unless it is clearly wrong." (The most important tip in his chapter.)

Yes, we know, that's obvious. But did you think of it?

U.S. tanks roll into Bosnia over new Sava bridge

SARAJEVO (R) — American tanks and troops rolled into Bosnia Sunday to keep the peace in 1996 when U.S. army engineers beat the Balkan winter and completed a pontoon bridge over the River Sava.

Less than two hours after the bridge was finished, the first tanks rumbled into Bosnia over a million dollars worth of gravel collected to shore up the ground after days of rain, mud, snow, sleet and ice.

U.S. engineers, dubbed "Water Rats," punched their fists in the air with delight. "I am very happy the Americans have come. It's the first time I can sleep peacefully at night," said 55-year-old retired electrician Nihad Mehmedovic. "They should have come earlier. That many lives could have been saved."

Completion of the stainless steel and aluminium bridge, overall length 600 metres, meant America's mighty first armoured division — the 20th century cavalry — was on the move at last to help seal peace after the 43-month Bosnian war, Europe's worst in half a century.

Jeep-style Humvees and tracked recovery vehicles were first across, and a short time later 70-tonne Abrams tanks started creeping over the river at a regulation eight km/h.

The bridge, the biggest built outside exercises since World War II, is the last link in a supply line stretching

from U.S. rear bases in Germany to its Bosnia headquarters at Tuzla.

Rear Commander General Pat O'Neal said his troops, who fought wintry weather all week, were only just beginning their work. "It's not done, (we've) just gotten started," he said.

"So we got the bridge in. But the real challenge is maintaining it, keeping it in place and keeping the troops fed and fuelled, and keeping the morale high," he told reporters.

Generals had promised the bridge would open on Saturday, a target already behind the original schedule which has been disrupted by Balkan weather extremes swinging from heavy snow to unexpected thaws causing floods. But after a cold snap during Friday night which forced work on the bridge to stop, Nash told his exhausted troops the bridge would not open until Sunday.

Conventional bridges over the Sava were destroyed when Croatia fought a six-month war with Serbia in 1991 after Zagreb broke with Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia.

It was a success for the U.S. forces a day after their first casualty underlined hazards facing the NATO-led Bosnian peace mission. Specialist Martin John Begosh of Rockville, Maryland, was injured after his vehicle hit a powerful anti-tank mine.

The U.S. said he was receiving the purple heart to

honour wounds in action. Mr. Begosh was reported in stable condition after being flown to a mobile military hospital in Zupanja, Croatia, the site of the pontoon bridge.

"Mines have always been our biggest concern and we are working very hard on that," President Bill Clinton said in Washington. "The mission itself is going very well."

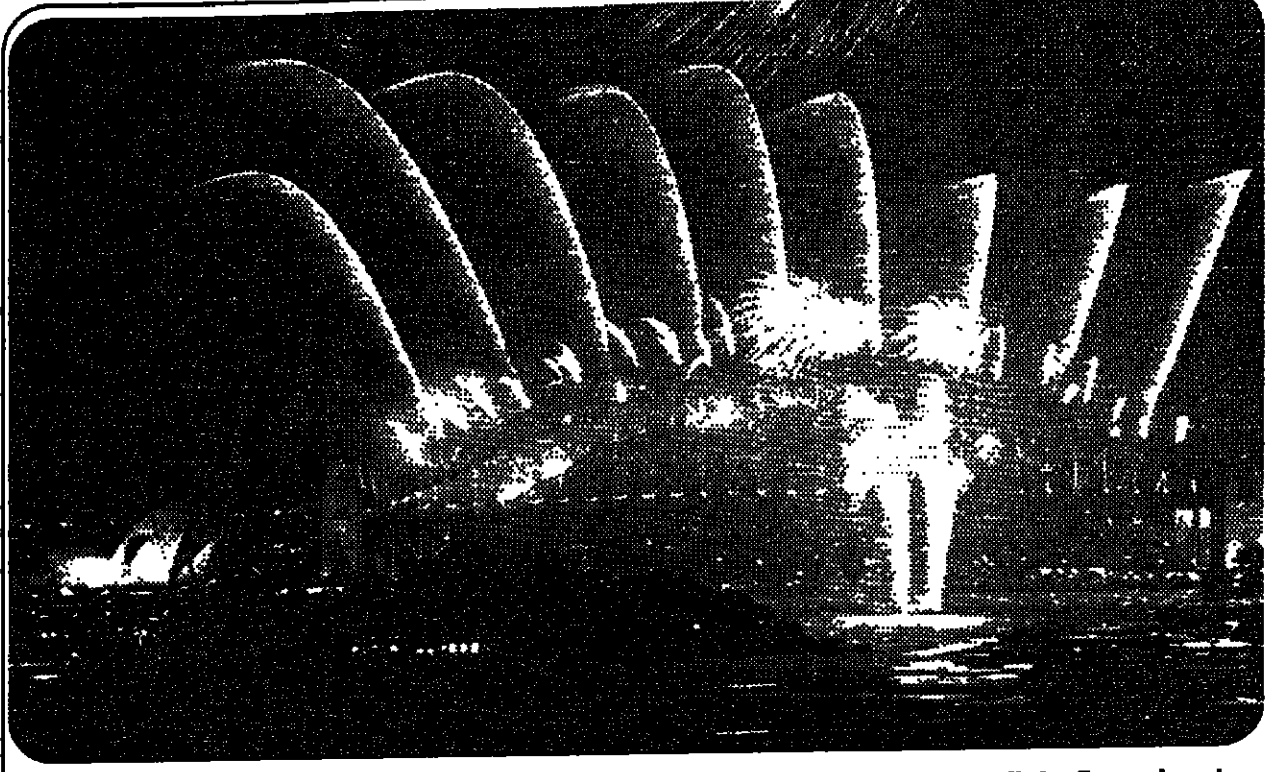
In Tuzla, 80 kilometres away, streamers went up in the town's bars as war-weary citizens planned their happiest New Year celebrations in four years, but they will not be partying with the U.S. military.

The soldiers will remain grounded on their air base, set among snowy fields scattered with domed haystacks and hamlets around Tuzla's edge.

On Sunday morning no party had yet been organised for them and Tuzla is off-limits. "The chaplains have arranged some extra services for tomorrow," a U.S. spokesman told Reuters.

The first armoured, bringing firepower unseen during the Bosnia war, is due to set up forward bases in Serb-held areas of north Bosnia, particularly the sensitive Posavina corridor linking Serb territories in the east and west.

Serb demands to widen the corridor, in the face of fierce opposition from Croatia and the Muslim-Croat federation controlling half of Bosnia, are to be the subject of international arbitration.



NEW YEAR'S FIREWORKS: The Sydney Opera House (L) and Harbour Bridge are lit by fireworks celebrating the New Year December 31. The fireworks were fired by operators in cranes on top of the bridge and on barges in the harbour, and cost a total of \$112,500 (Reuters photo)

Deposed emir arrives in S. Arabia

DUBAI (R) — Qatar's deposed emir arrived Sunday in Saudi Arabia, the fourth and most important stop in a Gulf tour aimed at rallying support for his return to power.

Crown Prince Abdullah, heading a high-level Saudi Arabian delegation, received the former emir, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani, at the airport, Saudi television showed.

Saudi Arabian King Fahd was not able to greet the emir on arrival as he was resting since he was discharged earlier this month from a Riyadh hospital after suffering a stroke.

Saudi Arabia, the region's emerging military power, is a key stop for Sheikh Khalifa's campaign to remind the

world that he is still the legal ruler of Qatar, diplomats said.

The rulers of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, his last stop, were all on hand to receive the deposed Qatari emir and see him off at the airport. They also held banquets in his honour.

Diplomats noted that the former emir, toppled by his son in June, was granted receptions befitting a head of state.

They say this could be seen as a snub to the current ruler but they doubt GCC states would get directly involved in an internal Qatari power struggle.

Qatar's other five Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

allies recognised the new emir — Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani — shortly after the coup.

Differences between Qatar and its GCC allies surfaced on Dec. 6 when the current emir boycotted the closing session of an annual GCC summit in Oman, embarrassing and angering the other GCC leaders.

Qatar, scheduled to host next year's summit, is opposed to the method used in appointing a new GCC secretary-general when Doha's candidate was dropped in favour of a Saudi national.

Gulf Arab media has highlighted Sheikh Khalifa's repeated vows to return to power

in tiny Qatar, which controls the world's third largest natural gas reserves.

Kuwait's Al Seyassah newspaper on Sunday quoted Sheikh Khalifa as saying he would stay in the United Arab Emirates until he fulfils his vow of regaining power.

It said Sheikh Khalifa, who was in Europe when he was deposed in the bloodless palace coup, would use the UAE city of Al Ain "as temporary quarters until his return soon."

"I tell them (Qataris): Be patient I will be back for all of you... I know for sure how they need their father," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

COLUMN

Dig to resume at 'Alexander the Great's tomb'

CAIRO (AFP) — A Greek-Egyptian team will resume excavations Sunday at a controversial site in the eastern oasis of Siwa which they say is the lost tomb of Alexander the Great, an official has said. The six Egyptian and seven Greek, including the leader and financier of the dig, Liana Souvaltz, will work at the site for two months, the head of the Supreme Council for Antiquities, Abdel Halim Nur Eddin, told AFP. In February Ms. Souvaltz raised a storm of controversy when she announced that she had discovered Alexander's tomb in Siwa oasis, in the desert near the Libyan-Egyptian border. She pointed to inscriptions found on the site she had been excavating since 1989. But an official Greek delegation discounted the claim, saying the writings dated to more than five centuries after Alexander's death in 323 B.C. Mr. Nur Eddin said he was "convinced the site is an important archaeological discovery", but would not conjecture whether it was actually the young conqueror's tomb. "We hope that this excavation season will offer some evidence," he said. The Greek members of the team are already at the site and the remainder were to have arrived by Sunday for resumption of the dig. Mr. Nur Eddin said. The site of Alexander the Great's tomb remains an enigma for archaeologists, most of whom place it in Alexandria, the Mediterranean city that the Macedonian ruler founded in 331 B.C., a year after conquering Egypt.

Egyptian woman arrested with poppy plants

CAIRO (AFP) — Police have arrested an Egyptian businesswoman who was smuggling 1,000 poppy plants into the country to produce opium in time for New Year celebrations, airport security officials said. The unnamed woman, arriving from Rome, attempted to bring the plants into Egypt inside two packages of dried flowers, they said, adding that the stash was "ready to be distributed for New Year celebrations." In the past few days Egyptian papers have reported increased arrests at ports and airports of smugglers bringing in drugs to meet the holiday season's higher demand.

Norwegian ends solo Antarctic trek

OSLO (R) — A Norwegian who tried to cross the Antarctic single-handed, abandoned the effort because of severe frostbite, his spokesman said Sunday. Boerge Oustland, 33, was rescued by an aircraft Saturday in the icy wilderness and was recuperating at Patriot Hills, the U.S. South Pole base, spokesman Hans Christian Erlandsen told the Norwegian news agency NTB. "Boerge Oustland has given up the attempt to cross the Antarctic on his own," Mr. Erlandsen was quoted as saying. "The reason is serious frostbite." He said Mr. Oustland reached the South Pole on Dec. 21 after a 44-day trek covering nearly 1,300 km. On Christmas day the explorer set out for the Pacific shores to complete the stretch but suffered increasingly from frostbite in his legs and he called by radio for help NTB said.

Shbeilat aide said to be detained

AMMAN (J.T) — Imad Ghanem, director of the office of Leith Shbeilat, has been held on Sunday on charges of slandering Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, according to a member of the defence team of Mr. Shbeilat.

Mr. Ghanem has been ordered held without bail, the lawyer said.

Mr. Shbeilat was held Dec. 9 on four charges that included, in addition to slandering Their Majesties, undermining the country's financial status and inciting sectarian and ethnic troubles.

Mr. Ghanem's detention could not be confirmed by official sources.

Shin Bet to be given legal status

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's Shin Bet secret service, founded with the state in 1948 to fight hostile activity, is headed for legal status, Justice Minister David Libai said Sunday.

"This is the first time we sit and think of a framework for Shin Bet activity based on the law," he told Israeli army radio which said a proposal would be submitted this week to Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Mr. Libai said the law, which must pass Israel's parliament, would establish the agency's duties and the responsibilities of those who oversee it.

"Who is responsible for the Shin Bet, who is over it, who supervises it? What is the job of the Shin Bet, what are the

responsibilities of the Shin Bet? All of this was never set in the law. Certainly the time has come to do so," Mr. Libai said.

But critics said the law would do nothing to curb Shin Bet excesses. Human rights groups accuse Shin Bet agents of torturing Palestinian prisoners.

Plans for a law predate the assassination in November of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Shin Bet bodyguard failed to prevent the killing and a state commission is investigating the security lapses.

Shimon Romah, a former head of the Shin Bet, said the changes in practice would be minimal, adding: "What is being done here is simply to protect the reality in law."

Israel considers compensating Arabs

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel said Sunday it was considering how to cope with lawsuits brought by Palestinians injured by Israelis during the Palestinian uprising.

Israel's Haaretz newspaper said more than 1,000 suits are pending against Israel for injuries and property damage in the amount of \$175 million.

A government official said the issue was raised at a meeting on Sunday of Prime Minister Shimon Peres' cabinet, and the cabinet would next week consider how to handle the suits.

Thousands of Palestinians were injured in street battles with Israeli forces in the uprising that began in 1987 and died down when Israel and the PLO agreed in 1993 on Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and the West Bank.

The newspaper quoted security sources as considering two ways to handle the suits: setting up a special Israeli tribunal to deal with them, or giving the Palestinian self-rule authority a sum of money and letting it settle the suits.

The official, briefing reporters, would not elaborate on what was being considered.

Sudan rejects charges of maltreatment of refugees

KHARTOUM (Agencies) — Sudan on Sunday denied Ethiopian allegations that it was mistreating Ethiopian refugees and accused the Addis Ababa regime of assassinating anti-government opponents abroad.

"The black record of the Ethiopian regime proves it assassinated and targeted Ethiopian refugees in neighbouring countries," a strongly worded foreign ministry statement said.

It said Ethiopia lacked "moral and ethical" standing to make accusations against Sudan.

It was the latest exchange between the neighbouring countries since relations worsened after Ethiopia accused Sudan of involvement in the June 26 attack on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa.

Mr. Mubarak was unhurt, but the Palestinian ambassador to Ethiopia was wounded in crossfire. Ethiopia and Egypt accuse Sudan of harbouring some of the 11 Egyptian soldiers accused in the attack.

On Friday, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin said he asked the U.N. High Commissioner for refugees to intervene to stop

the indiscriminate arrest, abuse and murder of Ethiopian refugees in Sudan.

Sudan's commissioner for refugees, Ihsan Ghabshawi, expressed regret over the Ethiopian allegations. She also said a number of refugees have been found involved in activities which violate their refugee status, including possession of explosives. She gave no further details.

Sudan hosts more than one million foreign refugees, mostly from Ethiopia and Eritrea. Two weeks ago, it started a voluntary repatriation of Ethiopian refugees in coordination with the United Nations and the Ethiopian government.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has launched an inquiry into the claims. UNHCR spokeswoman Ruth Marshall said in Geneva on Saturday.

A letter from the Ethiopian government to the UNHCR, made public Thursday, gave a detailed account of how Ethiopian refugees in Sudan were the victims of "harassment and continuous persecution," she said.

Syria rapprochement with Israel threatens ties with Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — The possibility of a peace deal between Syria and Iran's bitter foe Israel risks shattering the strategic alliance between Tehran and Damascus.

"Our relations with Syria are presently good, but Iran's position towards the (Middle East) peace process remains the same: The more a country approaches Israel the more it distances itself from us," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati warned recently.

Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, Tehran has had close ties with Damascus, enjoying its support during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war and regarding Syria as the main bulwark against Israeli influence in the region.

But there have been growing signs of strain as Iran's only ally in the Arab World shows seriousness in settling its conflict with the Jewish state, which Iran considers "illegitimate" and has called for its destruction.

"Iran appears to be taken by surprise the determination of Syrian leaders to conclude a peace agreement with Israel," an Arab diplomat in Tehran said Sunday.

"With peace in sight between Syria and Israel, Iran should start looking for a new ally in the Middle East if it wants to preserve its presence in the Arab World and links with Shiite Muslim movements like Lebanon's Hizbollah," he said.

Iran has greatly reduced its strategic alliance with Syria in the Middle East and has paid a high price to maintain Damascus's support for its policies against Israel and Iraq.

Other than reciprocal political support, Iran has extended major economic assistance to Syria, notably the practically free supply of oil to the energy-starved country in the 1980s.

Although Iran showed displeasure when Syria first considered peace talks with Israel, Iranian leaders appear to have begun taking seriously the possibility of a settlement only recently.

Syria's resumption of talks with Israel near Washington last Wednesday after a six-month break and its expression of support last week for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in its territorial dispute with Iran prompted the first serious signs of tension between the two countries.

Iran's Vice-President Hassan Habibi on Saturday called off a visit to Syria planned for next week, as Iranian newspapers launched an unprecedented attack on Damascus.

Official newspapers here reacted angrily to Syria's revived peace talks with Israel and its stand toward the Tehran-Abu Dhabi conflict over the Gulf islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb.

"Syria is seeking to change its regional diplomacy" at the cost of "forgetting old friends who helped it during its isolation in the Middle East in the 1980s and supplied it with oil," the pro-government Abrar daily charged Saturday.

It complained of "Syrian ingratitude" in the first such attack by an Iranian newspaper against Damascus.

On Friday the foreign ministry criticised the Damascus Declaration — a pact signed by Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf Arab

states in 1991 — for backing the UAE over the islands dispute in a meeting in Damascus on Thursday.

"These countries had better direct their attention at the Zionist regime rather than issue statements which can only lead to division and misunderstanding," among Muslim states in the region, it said.

According to informed sources, Mr. Habibi's trip to Damascus was postponed "indefinitely" in protest at Syria's stand on the Gulf islands.

"It is surprising that Syria which was in the progressive camp in the past decades has now become a tool of the United States and the Zionists to carry out their propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran," the Jomhuri Islami, a daily close to Islamic hardliners, said Sunday.